THE FREEMAN

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

The Failure of American Public Education

Educational Vouchers: The Double Tax

Education for One's Own Sake

Homeschooling and Educational Choice

FEBRUARY 1993

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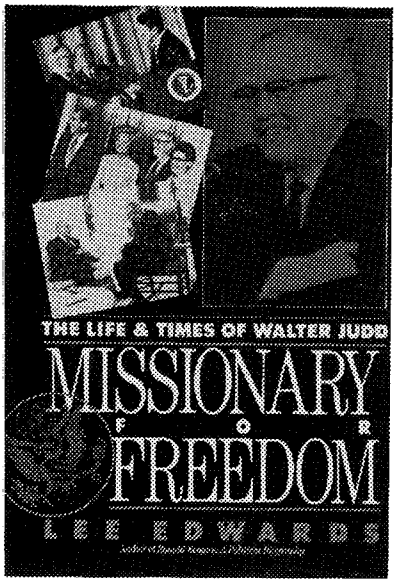
Missionary for Freedom:
The Life and Times of Walter Judd



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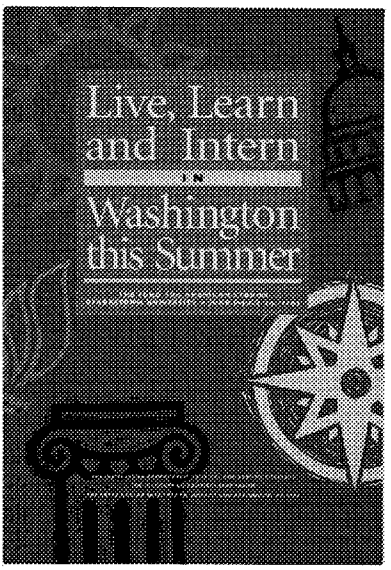

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PERSPECTIVE

Ideas

The history of mankind is the history of ideas. For it is ideas, theories, and doctrines that guide human action, determine the ultimate ends men aim at, and the choice of the means employed for the attainment of these ends.

—Ludwig von Mises

Money and Education

Study after study has found little link between per-student spending on education and student performance.

For example, school board revenues in the city of Chicago have increased 33 percent in the past four years. The average salary for Chicago teachers is $38,409, up 33 percent since 1987. Per-student spending in Chicago is the sixth highest among the area's 35 school districts. Yet the average American College Testing Program (ACT) score for the district is 17.0, the worst of any district in the metropolitan area. Sixty-nine percent of parents with children in the Chicago public schools say they would send them to private schools if they could afford it.

In Virginia, per-pupil spending and teachers' salaries in the public schools have risen 55 percent since 1982—and scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) have steadily declined after a slight increase between 1982 and 1985.

The average private school in Virginia spends only $2,645 per pupil—far less than even the lowest-funded public school district in the state. Yet average SAT scores in the private system are 951, compared with 900 in the public system.

Per-pupil expenditures are not always indicative of how much actually is spent on teaching, however.

In Virginia, 52 cents of every education dollar goes to overhead, administration and other non-instructional expenses.

In Georgia, 50 cents goes for non-instructional expenses.

Non-instructional spending in Georgia in-

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creased by 264 percent from 1980 to 1990, while spending on classroom teaching went up by just 96 percent.

—HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Outlawing the Sweet Tooth

Some time ago I had an interesting conversation in the checkout line at our local discount store with a young mother whose five-year-old son was proudly buying two candy bars with his own money. She was purchasing a helmet for him to wear when he rode his bicycle.

"It's the law now, you know," she said.

"Yes," I replied, "but I think it's unfortunate that the state forces parents to do this."

"But it's a good law," she countered. "It's for their own protection."

I agreed that it probably was safer to wear a helmet than not. "But at the same time," I continued, "the issue really isn't whether helmets are a good thing. The issue is who should decide what's good for your children—you or the state."

After a brief pause, I went on somewhat impertinently, "Do you take vitamins?"

Instead of telling me to mind my own business, she politely replied: "No, they're too expensive. But I feed my kids right, so I don't think I have to worry too much. I take them to the doctor, and they get their shots and stuff."

"But what if someone in the Department of Health got hold of a legislator and they decided that, since health care costs are so high, it would be best for everybody to take vitamins as part of a state-wide program of preventive medicine. Or," I continued with the rudeness of a typical zealot, "what if the state decided to outlaw candy bars out of concern for the public's dental health?"

"That's different," she said defensively. "My kids don't get candy very often, and, besides, the state would never do that."

"Don't be too sure," I replied. "If they have the power to force you to put a helmet on your child's head, they have the power to forbid you to feed him candy bars."

I'm wondering if that young mother read the item with a Washington dateline in our local newspaper this morning which began: "The Agriculture Department will retain a limit of six grams of sugar in each ounce of cereal provided to supplement the diets of low-income children and pregnant and breast-feeding women." The justification for this was that "the majority opinion of health and nutrition professionals suggests that the intake of sugar . . . is related to dental cavities and other health problems."

Can the abolition of candy bars be far off?

—WILMA J. MOORE

The Fallacy of Equal Opportunity

We are constantly told, it is true, that there ought to be an equal opportunity for all the children in the United States; therefore, it is said, federal aid ought to be given to backward states. But what shall we say about this business of "equal opportunity"? I will tell you what I say about it: I am entirely opposed to it. One thing is perfectly clear—if all the children in the United States have equal opportunities, no child will have an opportunity that is worth very much. If parents cannot have the great incentive of providing high and special educational advantages for their own children, then we shall have in this country a drab and soul-killing uniformity, and there will be scarcely any opportunity for anyone to get out of the miserable rut.

—J. GRESHAM MACHEN

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THE FAILURE OF AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION

by John Hood

Many American critics believe that the major problem with public education today is a lack of focus on results. Students aren't expected to meet high standards, the argument goes, and the *process* of education takes precedence over analyzing education *results* in policy-making circles.

This is a valid argument (as far as it goes). Indeed, it can be taken one important step further. We not only fail to hold individual students accountable for poor performance, we have also failed to hold the entire government-controlled school system accountable for its performance since at least World War II. Public education is itself a failure. Why shouldn't individual students follow its example?

The history of reform efforts in American public education is replete with half-hearted measures, with almost comical misdiagnoses of education problems, with blame-shifting, and with humbug. Everyone is an expert (most have, of course, suffered through the very system they want to reform). At any one time during the course of school reform, an illusion of debate often obscures a surprising consensus on the heralded "magic bullet" of the decade—be it school centralization or progressive education or preschool education or computerizing the classroom—that will solve America's education problems. These magic bullets always misfire. But instead of changing their weapon, policy-makers simply put another round in the chamber, foolishly believing that the newest fad will succeed despite the failures of its predecessors.

Some critics believe that public education reforms fail because they are compromised or sabotaged by the education lobbies —teacher associations, administrators, and the legislators in their pockets. There is certainly some truth to that explanation, as we shall see. But in many cases, attributing the failure of reform to subversion merely exonerates that reform. Most reform ideas are either irrelevant or destructive of education. They would fail whether organized political interests opposed them or not.

Many conservatives believe that American public education is in poor shape today because of cultural and social trends, most beginning in the 1960s, which destroyed classroom discipline, the moral basis for education, and a national consensus on what students should learn. Again, there is some truth in this proposition, but ultimately it

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fails to explain why American students do not possess the communication and computational skills they need today to succeed in college or in the working world.

Furthermore, many free-market thinkers believe that applying market competition to the public schools will solve many of America's educational problems. I'm sympathetic to this argument, but it ignores the role of government policies other than student assignment to schools, which inhibit school success. When government policy continues to impose rigid personnel rules, bureaucracy, regulations, and a mandate to use education to engineer social or political outcomes, a school cannot successfully impart the needed skills, knowledge, and perspective to its students—whether these students choose to be there or not.

Lastly, the rhetoric of school reform often ignores the crucial role of individual decisions (by students, by parents, by business owners, by educators) in determining educational outcomes. You can lead a horse to water, the old adage goes, but you can't make him drink. It's a folksy way of imparting an important individualist truth. Providing students opportunities at school does not guarantee success if students watch television rather than do their homework—and parents let them. By assuming that any set of reform ideas can magically create a well-educated citizenry, we oversell the role of policy-making. Education requires initiative, a trait notoriously difficult to create or impose.

A Century of Reform

Public education and public-education reform share a common history. There is no past paradise when all students excelled. There is no perfect prototype for public education hidden in history, to be uncovered today and bestowed on a thankful nation. Rather, American public education is best thought of, historically, as mediocre. It was a serviceable system for preparing students for an agrarian or assembly-line world in which only an elite pursued higher education.

Public education in America really began in earnest after the Civil War, when government-funded and -controlled schools supplanted the earlier system of private education. According to the U.S. Department of Education, some 57 percent of the 12 million school-aged Americans in 1870 were enrolled in public elementary or secondary schools, though only about 60 percent of those enrolled attended school on any given day and the average school year was 132 days. By the turn of the century, the percentage of school-aged children attending public schools had risen to 72 percent, with almost 70 percent of enrollees attending on any one of the 150 days in the school year. Most public education still occurred in the early grades—only two percent of the student population were in ninth grade or higher.

By 1989 almost 90 percent of school-aged children attended public schools. Almost all attended class daily (with some important local or regional exceptions) and the average school year had grown to 180 days—still too short, say many modern critics, but a 40 percent increase since Reconstruction. Most students stay in school at least throughout the high-school grades, while a record number are pursuing higher education.

American policy-makers and educators began to create in earnest our centralized, monopolistic public education system at the turn of the century. For example, over a relatively brief period from 1890 to 1910, public schools increased their share of the high-school population from two-thirds to about 90 percent—a proportion of public to private schools which has persisted until the present day. There were a number of factors motivating this change. During the last few decades of the nineteenth century, public education had grown steadily as a primarily locally controlled phenomenon, often emulating or taking over ownership from private schools. Education was still basically focused on learning skills, such as reading or arithmetic, and schools often reflected their communities in very obvious ways.

But by the start of the twentieth century, a number of different groups began to believe that a comprehensive, centrally con-

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trolled (at least on the city or state level), and bureaucratic public education system was crucial to America's future. The Progressive movement, for example, sought to replace haphazard government decision-making (such as that provided by political machines or community schools) with a more standardized, "predictable" approach. At the time, they viewed such change as necessary to eliminate corruption and graft. Similarly, the child welfare movement began to press for changes in family life—for replacing child labor and family neglect with public education.

Simultaneously, American business leaders began to see a decentralized, "patchwork" education system as a liability in international competition. U.S. manufacturers, especially, saw the rise of Germany as a significant economic threat and sought to imitate that country's new system of state-run trade schools. In 1905, the National Association of Manufacturers editorialized that "the nation that wins success in competition with other nations must train its youths in the arts of production and distribution." German education, it concluded, was "at once the admiration and fear of all countries." American business, together with the growing labor movement, pressed Congress to dramatically expand federal spending on education, especially for vocational instruction. Also, business and education leaders began to apply new principles of industrial organization to education, such as top-down organization and a "factory-floor" model in which administrators, teachers, and students all had a place in producing a standardized "final product." These leaders created professional bureaucracies to devise and implement policy.

Finally, perhaps the most important boosters of America's new public education system were what we might today call "cultural conservatives." The turn of the century, after all, was a time of tremendous immigration. As more and more immigrants arrived in America, bringing with them a plethora of languages, cultural traditions, and religious beliefs, American political leaders foresaw the potential dangers of Balkanization. The public education system, once designed primarily to impart skills and knowledge, took on a far more political and social role. It was to provide a common culture and a means of inculcating new Americans with democratic values. Public schools, in other words, were to be a high-pressure "melting pot" to help America avoid the dismal fate of other multi-national polities. American political leaders were all too familiar with the Balkan Wars of the early 1900s, and were intent on avoiding a similar fate.

The Expanding Role of Public Education

By now, you should be experiencing a heavy dose of déjà vu. These themes and concerns have continued to dominate American public education until the present day. "Do-gooders" throughout the twentieth century have sought to expand the role of public education in all aspects of what was once family life, such as instilling moral values, providing health and nutrition, fighting delinquency and crime, and protecting children from physical and psychological abuse. Today, they are the primary advocates of Head Start and other supplements to school that intervene in virtually every aspect of a student's life.

Business groups, especially national organizations and corporate magnates, have frequently played a high-profile role in educational affairs during this century, constantly warning of the economic threats posed by international competitors (as in the Sputnik scare of the 1950s or the "competitiveness" debate today) and supporting a professional, centralized approach to public education (in stark contrast to what the same business leaders believed was appropriate in economic policy).

Finally, a host of groups across the political spectrum have looked to public schools as a key means of accomplishing what they consider to be important political or social objectives, such as racial integration, social tolerance, democratic participation, or environmental awareness.

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The history of public education reform is a story in which these groups—sometimes in concert and sometimes in opposition to professional educators with their own designs—jockey for position to make their indelible mark on the school policies of the day. Reform efforts have reappeared regularly. In the 1940s, the watchword was "life adjustment education." Educators, worried about a growing dropout rate and the seemingly frantic pace of post-War technological innovations, sought to help students adjust to a changing world. One example of a class introduced in public schools during this period was entitled "Basic Urges, Wants, and Needs and Making Friends and Keeping Them." That's the *1940s*, not the 1960s.

This "promising" development fell victim to the education scare that began when the Soviet Union put its Sputnik satellite into space in 1957. The focus shifted back toward learning basic subjects, though in new and sometimes misguided ways. A flurry of activity followed the Sputnik scare, exemplified by such innovations as new math, open classrooms, programmed instruction, and ungraded schools (which are now making a comeback). During the 1960s, these ideas began to filter throughout the American public education system (all the more susceptible to fads and trends because of its increasingly centralized nature). Some of these notions worked in particular schools, while failing dismally in others—another common result of school reforms generally. In the 1970s, some new ideas were added to this increasingly unwieldy mix, such as the behavioralism craze, whole-language reading instruction, mastery learning, and the spread of standardized testing of both students and teachers.

Finally, during the 1980s the school reform bandwagon got a new set of tires and a fresh coat of paint. Following the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, governors instituted all sorts of teacher training and testing programs, curriculum changes, and higher performance standards for students. At the same time, states dramatically increased spending on all facets of public education. And President Ronald Reagan, promising to eliminate the U.S. Education Department during his campaign, actually helped administer a significant outflow of new federal money for public education, mostly directed toward specific programs for needy or minority students.

What Was Gained?

Despite the widespread public impression, felt every five years or so since World War II, that something "new" was happening in public school reform, education statistics tell a different story. They demonstrate very little change in student performance (and most measurable changes were downward). Here's a brief report card on four decades of public education reform:

Many so-called education experts believe that class size—the ratio of students to teacher—must be reduced to improve learning. We've already tried it. From 1955 to 1991, the average pupil-teacher ratio in U.S. public schools dropped by 40 percent.

These experts also proclaim that lack of funding hamstrings reform, and that the 1980s were a particularly bad time for school finances. Wrong again. Annual expenditures per pupil in U.S. public schools exploded by about 350 percent in real dollars from 1950 ($1,189) to 1991 ($5,237). In only two years during this 40-year period did spending fall: 1980 and 1981. Spending grew by about a third in real terms from 1981 to 1991.

The average salary of public school teachers rose 45 percent in real terms from 1960 (the first year data are available) to 1991. This increase masks a more variable trend. Real salaries rose until 1974, when they began to level off and even decline. The average salary reached a trough of $27,436 in 1982, after which it rose to an all-time high of $33,015 in 1991. Instructional staff in public schools generally saw their earnings increase faster than the average full-time employee—from 1950 to 1989 the ratio of instructional-staff salary to the average full-time salary in the U.S. increased by 22 percent (although it sank from 1972 to 1980).

Student performance has hardly kept

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pace with the dramatic increases in resources devoted to public education. While the percentage of students aged 17 at the beginning of the school year who graduated from high school rose 30 percent from 1950 to 1964, it has leveled off since then. In fact, the 1991 percentage is lower than the 1969 peak of 77.1 percent.

Evidence from the National Assessment of Educational Progress and other performance measures shows how poorly served America's public school students really are. Just five percent of 17-year-old high school students in 1988 could read well enough to understand and use information found in technical materials, literary essays, historical documents, and college-level texts. This percentage has been falling since 1971.

Average Scholastic Aptitude Test scores fell 41 points between 1972 and 1991. Apologists for public education argue that such factors as the percentage of minority students taking the SAT can explain this drop. Not true. Scores for whites have dropped. And the number of kids scoring over 600 on the verbal part of the SAT has fallen by 37 percent since 1972, so the overall decline can't be blamed merely on mediocre students "watering down" the results.

Only six percent of 11th graders in 1986 could solve multi-step math problems and use basic algebra. Sixty percent did not know why *The Federalist* was written, 75 percent didn't know when Lincoln was president, and one in five knew what Reconstruction was.

Another measure of the failure of public education is that almost all institutions of higher education now provide remedial instruction to some of their students. The Southern Regional Education Board surveyed its members in 1986 and found that 60 percent said at least a third of their students needed remedial help. Surveying this evidence of failure among college-bound students, former Reagan administration official Chester E. Finn, Jr., wrote that "surely college ought to transport one's intellect well beyond factual knowledge and cultural literacy. But it's hard to add a second story to a house that lacks a solid foundation."

Why American Public Education Fails

There are several characteristics of government institutions which, common to virtually all American public schools, inhibit the successful operation of schools. These include:

Rigid personnel rules and regulations. Those schools with little to no interference from outside supervisors or regulators on hiring and firing decisions tend to be the most effective schools as measured by student performance. John Chubb of the Brookings Institution and Terry Moe of Stanford University provided a good explanation for this in their 1990 book *Politics, Markets and America's Schools*:

> Among the reasons why direct external control may interfere with the development of an effective school, perhaps the most important is the potentially debilitating influence of external control over personnel. If principals have little or no control over who teaches in their schools, they are likely to be saddled with a number of teachers, perhaps even many teachers, whom they regard as bad fits. In an organization that works best through shared decision-making and delegated authority, a staff that is in conflict with the leader and with itself is a serious problem . . . such conflict may be a school's greatest organizational problem. Personnel policies that promote such conflict may be a school's greatest burden.

Tenure is not the only barrier to successful school organization. School organizations that call for greater differentiation among teachers and pay some teachers more than others on the basis of performance or drawing power rather than seniority clash with government-mandated salary schedules. Positions and salary levels are decided by the state without any relationship to a particular school's situation. To foster successful reorganization of schools and more effective and efficient use of teachers, school systems or even individual schools must be able to employ their teach-

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ing staff as they see fit and pay them accordingly. If a school has a hard time finding a good science teacher (not a hypothetical situation in many districts) it should be able to set the salary for that position at a level which will attract qualified persons.

Uniform salary schedules were originally enacted to address racial and social inequities among teachers, not as a "better way" of organizing the teaching force. These inequities have largely been addressed and can be prevented by other means. But like so many governmental policies, uniform salary schedules have outlived their usefulness. Reorganization might involve paying teachers of one subject more than teachers of another subject, or paying a good teacher with ten years' experience more than a mediocre teacher with 15 years' experience. As education researcher Denis Doyle of the Hudson Institute wrote: "There is no mystery as to how to find and retain qualified teachers of mathematics or the sciences. Pay them what the market demands, provide them with benefits that are competitive, and create a work environment in which they can derive genuine professional satisfaction. Pay differentials are the answer."

And yet mediocre teachers, who dominate teacher unions and the education lobbyists in Washington and the state capitals, continue to resist this basic change.

A civil service system. A related set of problems for American public education stems from the early twentieth-century view that public services can and should be delivered by a regimented, compartmentalized civil service. All indications are that the teaching profession will best be organized in the future as firms providing specific services to schools, rather than as a unionized set of government employees with tenure and little performance-based accountability. They should, in other words, come to resemble law firms. In teaching firms, more senior partners would enjoy tremendous name recognition and respect, attracting clients for the firms while imparting their proven teaching strategies to junior partners and associates. Can you imagine such a system evolving within today's public education system?

Monopoly. It's not an attack on teachers to suggest that they, like all other workers, respond to incentives. When a school enjoys monopoly control over its students, the incentive to produce successful students is lacking. When student performance doesn't correlate with reward on the school level, individual teachers see no need to go the extra mile to help students when the teacher next door receives the same rewards for merely babysitting. And without the pressures of competition in education, parents are bothersome nuisances rather than clients who might potentially go elsewhere if not satisfied.

Centralized decision-making. When decisions on such issues as the makeup of the history curriculum or the daily school schedule is mandated from above, school leaders lose initiative and school policies become disconnected with the students and teachers they supposedly exist to serve. At a time when American industry is abandoning the factory model and top-down management as hopelessly irrelevant to modern enterprises, so too must schools seek better lines of communication and a more effective way to make decisions about everyday problems.

Tinkering around the edges of the public school system might reduce the impact of one or two of these government characteristics, but they'll never be eliminated without substantially limiting government interference in education.

There is much disagreement about whether these characteristics have become more pronounced over the last few decades. But the trend lines aren't the point. In a world in which the returns on education dropped off fairly rapidly in the upper grades and college—in other words, when a junior-high school education was enough to obtain gainful employment and function in society— America could basically afford to have an inefficient, bureaucratized, and ineffective system of public education. When students fell through the cracks, they had a fairly soft landing. Today, however, tech-

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nological innovation and a host of other factors have dramatically increased the returns on education. All students must be able to compute, communicate, and think to make their way in an increasingly complex and confusing world.

The Triumph of Politics

What *has* clearly been on the rise in recent decades is the use of America's public schools for the purpose of engineering some social outcome deemed desirable by political leaders. This is an unavoidable, and perhaps insurmountable, failing of government-run education.

Both liberal do-gooders and conservative culture warriors look to public education to achieve public goods. In the 1950s and 1960s, a national focus on the problem of racial segregation helped steer education policy away from questions of excellence to questions of equity and access. In the 1970s, activists bent on such diverse causes as environmentalism, humanism, spiritualism, and even socialism began to target the school curriculum. They produced all sorts of programs, handbooks, textbooks, and other materials, and used political influence to have these adopted as part of the school day in many jurisdictions. Meanwhile, America's developmental psychologists and early childhood experts, deep in their environmentalist (in the sense of non-genetic) phase, got the attention of educators and political leaders. They argued that formal education should be supplemented with special counseling and self-esteem programs, that formal education should be extended into the preschool years, and that the federal government should be involved in funding these early-intervention and compensatory education programs. Policy-makers believed them. So we now have Chapter 1, Head Start, in-school counselors, and other "innovations," the usefulness of which is now in great doubt.

When every call for fundamental change in American education is rebutted not by arguments about student achievement but by arguments focusing on race, class, social mixing, and other social concerns, it is difficult to imagine real progress. When teachers spend much of their day filling out forms, teaching quasi-academic subjects mandated from above, and boosting student self-esteem (as contrasted with self-respect, which is earned rather than worked up), learning is difficult if not impossible.

While government is wholly unsuited to teach America's students because of all the characteristics listed above, private schools offer an example of what American education could be. After trending downward for decades, private school enrollment increased during the 1980s. This year, private schools accounted for about 12 percent of America's students. The fastest-growing segment of the private school market is the non-religious school, but Catholic and other parochial schools continue to supply excellent education opportunities to poor children and minorities both in inner-cities and in rural areas. Studies show that private schools produce better students than public schools do, even when you take into account for the selectivity of some private schools.

It's true, as some public-education boosters charge, that even private school students have shown some declines in achievement over the past half-century—but that proves only that other influences in society besides schooling can have a significant impact on student performance. Private schools provide a better education than public schools even though American families generally do not sufficiently value education and students often lack initiative and concentration.

By any reasonable measure, America's monopolistic, bureaucratic, over-regulated system of public schools is woefully unprepared to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Political, business, and education leaders continue to talk about "reforming" the current public education system. They should, instead, be discussing how to replace it. □

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EDUCATIONAL VOUCHERS: THE DOUBLE TAX

by Gary North

Last year the Bush administration, responding to pressure for choice in education, proposed the voucher system. "Specifically, the president's proposal would give a $1,000 scholarship to every child of a middle- or low-income family in a participating school district. Parents must be permitted to use the scholarship at any lawfully operated school." So wrote Lamar Alexander, President Bush's Secretary of Education, in the conservative newspaper *Washington Times* (August 30, 1992).

Notice two key elements of the recommended legislation. First, there will be no vouchers for the rich, however "rich" may be defined by the statute or in subsequent legislation. When it comes to vouchers, all families are equal, but some are more equal than others. Every family will be entitled to participate, since tax money is paying for it—every family except those families that might be willing and able to buy such services apart from the voucher system. When the subsidies force up the price of private education, the way Medicare has forced up the price of American medicine, the rich or the scrupulous will have to look out for themselves. This is a compulsory wealth-redistribution program. It is not politically neutral. Neither is education.

Second, pay close attention to the key words: *lawfully operated schools*. What does "lawfully operated" mean? It means lawfully operated in terms of local, state, and above all, federal rules and regulations. It means that every private school that accepts a single voucher payment from one student will be as subject to federal bureaucrats as any college or university is if it enrolls a student who has received federal scholarship aid. How many Grove City Colleges are there? How many private schools will turn away students who come with government checks in hand? Not many.

There is a rule in all things associated with state funding. Anyone who ignores this rule is either naive or suicidal. Here is the rule: *If you take the state's nickel, you accept the state's noose*. You may prefer an older version: "If you take the queen's shilling, you do the queen's bidding." In short, you do not get something for nothing.

The overriding economic question regarding educational vouchers is this one: "At what price will parents sell their birthright, namely, control over their children's education?" A subordinate question is this one: "At what price will private school administrators sell their ability to deal with parents?" Sadly, we can be fairly sure of the answer: a low price.

The More Things Change. . .

The amazing fact is that the education voucher issue has changed very little since *The Freeman* published an earlier version of

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this essay in May 1976. The political conservatives are still trying to "clean up the public schools" by introducing competition through vouchers. The Christian school movement is still confident that vouchers will help them financially but without any negative side effects, such as the introduction of controls by the state. The public school teacher unions are still totally opposed to vouchers because vouchers will create "elite schools"—supposedly a very undemocratic thing to allow, at least until it is time to choose a college for your children.

Some things have changed, however. The public schools cost more to operate per child enrolled, even discounting for price inflation. Public schools are far less safe. Achievement scores have dropped. And the voters are finally aware of the extent of the decline.

What I wrote in 1976 is equally true today: the fundamental issue is the locus of sovereignty in education. We need to ask: Who is responsible for the education of children—parents, churches, or the state? My answer has not changed: parents. My political analysis has not changed: any element of coercion by the state, including financing, shifts the locus of sovereignty away from parents toward the state. My economic analysis also has not changed: to discover who is operationally sovereign over education in any society, follow the money.

We are continually bombarded by newspaper and magazine headlines informing us of the continuing "crisis in education," which actually is a crisis in government-operated education. Virtually all the available data reveal that the crisis is accelerating. Inner-city schools have become literal battlefields between rival gangs, between teachers and students, between administrators and increasingly vociferous faculty unions, and most important, between outraged parents and the whole system. Yet the crisis is in no way confined to inner-city schools. The suburban schools of the white middle class are burdened with the multiple plagues of student boredom, drug addiction, and rapidly increasing alcoholism. Twenty-five years of falling scores on the college entrance examination reveal the steady nature of the erosion, despite the acceleration of costs associated with the public schools.

Educators cannot bring themselves to admit that the crisis is anything more than a temporary aberration—an aberration from the "normal" which itself was dead long before today's administrators were born. The theories multiply, the explanations proliferate, and the crisis gets worse. What the last decade has brought is an understanding on the part of the public and a minority of government school employees (untenured, generally) that there is no answer.

Like the sinking ship which finally takes on too much water, the government education system is irretrievable. It will be useful in the future only as scrap. But what about those millions of students who will go through the system before it finally sinks? Will they too become useful only as scrap?

Parents are becoming aware of "the discussion syndrome." The endless discussions in half-empty halls between a few parents and local administrators have not altered anything. The teacher conferences, the administrator conferences, the PTA conferences, and all the other conferences have proved useful only for the cataloguing of the unsolved and increasingly unsolvable problems connected with government education. Solutions have not emerged from conferences—or at least no solutions acceptable to parents, administrators, school boards, students, state legislators, and an angry group of levy-rejecting voters. If there are no solutions, why pay higher taxes? This is the reasoning of the voters. The reasoning of the school administrators is different. They only want to discover a new source of tax money that will be acceptable to the voters, or better yet, that will not be subject to public elections at all.

The Locus of Sovereignty

The ultimate source of the educational crisis stems from an error in first principles. Once committed to this error, the public education system has floundered repeatedly. To locate the source of the error, men

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need only ask themselves a single question: Who is responsible for the education of a child? The answers, of course, are varied: the parents, the church, the civil government, or a combination of the three.

The conflicts in education are in fact conflicts over a much more fundamental issue: the locus of sovereignty, and hence, the locus of personal responsibility. The person or institution which possesses sovereignty must be the one which takes on the responsibility. By affirming the legitimacy of tax-supported education, voters have attempted to transfer their responsibilities for the education of their children to another agency, the state. Yet at the same time, they affirm their own sovereignty over the content and structure of the educational system. That they have lost almost every battle in their war with tenured, state-supported educational bureaucrats is the direct result of the public's abdication of personal responsibility, family by family, for the education of their children. The war was lost on the day that parents, as voters, decided to transfer the financial responsibilities of educating their own children to other members of the body politic. While Horace Mann can be regarded as the general who was victorious in the 1830s and 1840s over private education in Massachusetts, he was only conducting mopping-up operations. The end had been determined two centuries earlier when the Puritans of Massachusetts affirmed the principle of compulsory local education, with subsidies to poor families.

Any system of education must ultimately be the reflection of, and product of, the philosophical principles of those who finance the system. The decision about the financing of any institution inescapably determines the shape and content of that institution. Modern men, being secular, now recognize this fact when applied to the institution of the church. They see that a state-supported church is antithetical to the principle of freedom of conscience. They see, as do religious zealots like Roger Williams, that state-financed churches become the tools of the state which supplies the funds. But modern men do not see that this strict relationship between financing and operations applies *a fortiori* to government school systems. Somehow, they think, education is corrupted when churches are involved, but not so when governments are involved. Like the established churchmen of two centuries ago, today's priests and parishioners of the public schools refuse to recognize the nature of their relationship to the state.

Who Pays?

Do men finance their children's educations directly, through the personal financial sacrifice of the family unit? If so, then the family is sovereign over education. The school is then merely an extension of the family. The family makes use of the efficiencies associated with the division of labor. Parents hire professional educators to train their children, but those who are hired are paid to adapt their educational skills to the needs of the families that are financing the education. This can be done directly, through family-controlled school boards, but it can also be accomplished through the indirect means of the market. The family hires the tutor, or the school, in the same way that it hires any other servant. The parents are directly responsible for their children, and the selection of a school is an act of responsible stewardship. The family has not delegated the responsibility of educating the children to anyone else. It controls the purse strings—the ultimate affirmation of earthly sovereignty.

The more distant the source of the school's funds from the family, the less control the family has over the selection of the teachers and equipment. If the church finances the education of its members' children, then a layer of institutional bureaucracy is interposed between parents and teachers. This may be agreeable to many parents, but if church members other than the parents are expected to finance the school (as is the case in most instances), then they too have a legitimate right to determine school policies.

The bureaucrats gain their greatest con-

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trol in tax-supported systems. Sovereignty is so diluted at the level of the individual citizen that the expertise of the professional and tenured bureaucrats is overwhelmingly powerful. But their power is not tied to a personal relationship with the children (as it is with a parent), nor is it linked to a financial dependence on the parents, nor is it even linked to a community of shared values, as in the case of a church school. Their power stems from the unwillingness of legislators to turn off the funds. And the legislators' unwillingness to interfere stems from two primary facts of political life: (1) the experts have an aura of invincibility about them, plus tenure; and (2) the voters still believe in the establishment of the public school church. It is easier to give speeches than to take action, so legislators give speeches. Most of them are re-elected most of the time, so the policy pays off in the coin of the political realm: votes.

The crisis of education is therefore a crisis in the realm of values, with the values of the parents coming into conflict with the values, philosophies, and incompetence of those in control of the tax-supported educational system. If the parents continue to capitulate to the philosophy of public education, then they will continue to be defeated in their attempts to gain the kind of education they want for their children. There is only one way that all parents can gain such satisfaction: they must pay for the education of their children. They can earn the money or they can convince some third party to give them or their children the necessary funds on a voluntary basis, but the parents must pay. If they want to get what they pay for, they must pay directly, rather than paying through the coercive means of state taxation.

Until men are willing to cut off the political funding of the established church of America, they will see the educational crisis escalate. The visible sign of sovereignty is the ability to pay for a service and the willingness to do so. Nothing short of this will suffice to solve the crisis in the government schools, for the educational crisis is ultimately a conflict over sovereignty. He who pays with his own funds will win; he who continues to pay by voting cannot possibly win.

Pseudo-Market Schemes

The Bush administration's voucher plan was inspired by a suggestion made by Professor Milton Friedman, one of the most technically proficient economists in America. As a defender of the principle of market efficiency, he has been able to gain many adherents within the economics profession. He has been especially successful in challenging the inefficiencies of the federal regulatory commissions. One of his most popular and widely read books, *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962), was a landmark of the 1960s, for it was popularly written by a professional economist who had long before established his technical proficiency before his peers. Some of the policy recommendations of the book, such as the abolition of occupational licensure by civil governments, have not been taken seriously by most economists and certainly not by professionals who now hold occupational licenses from the civil government. Yet from the point of view of those who are convinced of the technical superiority of the free market over governmental regulation, it is this kind of uncompromising stand taken by Dr. Friedman which is most valuable in the defense of freedom, not to mention capitalism.

The problem that many free market advocates have with some of Dr. Friedman's policy recommendations is that too often he spends many pages in devising ingenious schemes that would make government programs more efficient and, Dr. Friedman fervently hopes, less burdensome to the taxpayers, businessmen, and innocent citizens of the land. These policy recommendations have one feature in common: they are pseudo-market devices. They would create a kind of shadow market—"almost a free market"— that could provide success indicators analogous to those provided by a truly free market. In doing so, he argues, these pseudo-market alterations would make government more responsive to the needs of citizens.

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The Voucher Scheme

Perhaps the most interesting of all of the pseudo-market policy recommendations promoted by Dr. Friedman is his educational voucher plan. Under such a school financing system, each family would receive one voucher for each school-age child in the family. The voucher would be redeemable in money upon presentation by a private school to the state or local government. Its value would be equal to the average per student cost of education in the district. (This figure, by the way, is seldom even calculated by school boards, for obvious political and public relations reasons, and when it is calculated, it virtually never includes such crucial items as the interest which the government might have earned had it sold off the school buildings and invested the money elsewhere, such as in a bank which would loan the purchase money to a local profit-making school.) The parents could then send their students to a public school or to a private school. If the cost of tuition were higher in the private school than the value of the voucher, the parents could make up the difference by paying more money.

The advantages of this scheme, argue the supporters of school vouchers, would be considerable. The parents gain back their lost sovereignty. They decide where the children will attend school. The public schools would be forced to compete for students, thereby increasing their efficiency. Private schools would spring up everywhere in response to the existence of vouchers. The diversity of educational opportunities would be fostered. The costs of administration would be very low, we are assured.

There is no doubt that the logic of the voucher program is initially impressive. Parents would seem to have far more power in selecting educational alternatives under the voucher system. The conformity of bureaucratic education would be challenged by a new diversity. It would save money and increase freedom. What more could we ask for? In any case, what more can we expect in an age of wealth redistribution? This is always the key argument in favor of the creation of pseudo-market schemes: no way exists to re-establish a truly free market, so this is the best we can hope for.

The Locus of Sovereignty Revisited

It all sounds so plausible, yet it overlooks the fundamental problem of voucher-financed education. The question must still be asked: Where is the locus of sovereignty? And the answer must still be the same: the civil government. The voucher program violates the most important principle of education: parents are responsible for financing their children's education. He who is responsible is also legally sovereign, and vice versa. Operationally, the source of the funding determines the locus of sovereignty. The goal of all those who would defend market arrangements must be to determine the *moral* locus of sovereignty in any particular circumstance, and then see to it that the sovereign agent be made legally and economically responsible for the exercise of his power. By failing to demand that parents be the source of funding for their own children's education, the promoters of the voucher scheme have abdicated their responsibility in extending the principles of voluntarism and personal responsibility.

In the voucher system, the source of the funding is still the taxation system. The financing is based on the principle that it is legitimate to use political power in order to grant benefits to one group at the expense of another. The principle of coercion is still dominant. The dominant principle, over time, will thwart the elements of voluntarism in any pseudo-market scheme. The state is still the operational sovereign over education, simply because the threat of violence, which is the state's legal monopoly, is the source of the funds for education.

There is no doubt that Dr. Friedman recognizes this fact, yet he does not emphasize it. He believes that the technical alteration of the way in which coercively collected taxes are redistributed can overcome

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the sovereignty of the state. He acknowledges that the authority of the parents in a voucher scheme cannot be absolute. The state-financed "educational diversity" under a voucher system is a diversity operating within government-established guidelines. Money spent by the state can never be on a "no strings attached" basis. There is always more demand for government money than there is money available to meet the demand (unless the purchasing power of government money falls to zero). Those who are legally responsible for the distribution of tax money must have legal guidelines or else rampant waste and dishonesty will instantly appear, and the treasury will be emptied overnight. This is why statist education must be bureaucratic education, with guidelines imposed from above, since the money comes from the state.

There is no escape from the rules of bureaucracy in a voucher system. Friedman acknowledges this fact: "Governments could require a minimum level of schooling financed by giving parents vouchers redeemable for a specified maximum sum per child per year if spent on 'approved' educational services. Parents would then be free to spend this sum and any additional sum they themselves provided on purchasing educational services from an 'approved' institution of their own choice."

The key word, of course, is "approved." Why Dr. Friedman has chosen to put the word in quotes is not altogether clear. Does he mean "kind of approved"? Certainly, he is wise enough to know that when the state bureaucrats approve or disapprove, they do not hide their actions in quotation marks. They simply decide. They decide in terms of criteria appropriate to the continued functioning of the statist educational bureaucracy. As Dr. Friedman wrote: "Any subsidy should be granted to individuals to be spent at institutions of their own choosing, provided only that the schooling is of a kind that is desired to subsidize." *Desired by whom* to subsidize? The parents? Hardly; they are the ones to be dictated to, not dictated by. The parents will be told where they can freely spend their vouchers, and they have to that degree lost their sovereignty. The state provides the funds through its monopoly of coercion; the state shall determine, coercively, how and where those funds are to be spent.

Controlling the Alternatives

What the decades-long erosion of the government school system has provided is a long list of reasons why it would be profitable for each family to remove its children from the subsidized schools. A small but growing minority of parents is doing just that. The state bureaucrats are legally prohibited from providing sectarian schools, ideologically prohibited from providing free market education, and apparently unable to provide competent instruction. They see their task as ensuring standards, which means ensuring educational conformity. The rise of an independent school system is a threat to public school administrators. They are as hostile to alternative educational programs as the postal system's administrators are to United Parcel Service or anyone else carrying first-class mail.

What we are witnessing is a conflict over sovereignty. Who is responsible for the training of children, the state or the parents? The lines are being drawn far more sharply today than at any other time in this nation's history. Pseudo-market schemes cannot solve questions of ultimate sovereignty, or at least they cannot solve them to the benefit of free market institutions.

State schools rest on a whole series of erroneous assumptions. First, that the state is ultimately sovereign in the field of education—the quasi-parent of every child. Second, that the state schools can teach children totally neutral values—universally acceptable principles that all education must provide. Third, that it is the moral as well as legal obligation of taxpayers to finance the school system. Fourth, that the professional, tenured, and civil-service-protected officials of the educational monopoly are the people best prepared to operate the educational system.

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The voucher system challenges directly only the last of these assumptions, and then only superficially. After all, state schools will still be permitted to operate. The voucher system necessarily requires the *licensing of schools*. For those who favor bureaucratic licensing of alternative educational systems by the state bureaucrats whose jobs are threatened by alternative educational systems, I recommend chapter nine of Dr. Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*: the chapter on occupational licensing.

As private schools continue to replace the disintegrating government schools at the primary and secondary levels, the state's educational bureaucrats will have to take decisive action to protect their monopoly. One way to accomplish this is to refuse to certify any more schools. (I am assuming that outright abolition will not be tolerated politically or in the courts.) This approach may work for a time, since parents are concerned about quality schools. By some peculiar twist of logic, the parents of private school children somehow believe that the state licensing boards are competent to certify educational performance, despite the fact that the state schools, which the boards have authorized, are anathema to the parents in question.

Private school administrators, who come to parents in the name of a superior educational program, are equally hypnotized by the boards of certification. The most intelligent response is that made by Robert Thoburn, owner of the profit-making Fairfax Christian School of Fairfax, Virginia: "If the bureaucrats want me to certify their schools, they can come to me and I'll look over their programs. That's my view of certification."

If the certification ploy does not work, then the last hope of state educational bureaucrats is the voucher system. If parents continue to send their children to uncertified schools, then the state must find a way to convince private school administrators that they must register with the state and conform their programs to state educational standards. The voucher system is the most logical means of achieving this goal. Vouchers will create a second, pseudo-free market school system, using "free" in both senses: independent and without cost to the users. The state-operated schools will then compete with the state-licensed schools. Almost no third alternative will be economically possible.

Taxed and Taxed Again

Those parents who want their children out of the government-operated schools (which their taxes support) will also be paying for the operation of voucher-supported, state-licensed schools. These parents must turn down the first subsidy (free public education in a government school), turn down a second subsidy (vouchers for government-licensed schools), and come up with after-tax income to finance their children's education in a truly independent school.

This is assuming they can find such a school. To do so, they must locate other parents equally committed religiously and ideologically to the principle of independent education, and also financially able to put their preference into action. How many concerned parents will do this? How many private school administrators will be able to operate a school while denying admittance to those who would pay with vouchers? How many of these schools with total commitment to private education will there be? I can tell you: very, very few.

Not until the blight so obvious in the government-operated schools has spread to the government-licensed voucher schools will parents even consider bearing the second tax (vouchers) and find money to pay for an independent education. In short, vouchers are the most promising tool for the suppression of independent private education now at the disposal of state educational bureaucrats.

What will the price be? What may not have been clear to Dr. Friedman back in the early 1960s is clear to us now. We will have federal guidelines operating in every voucher-using school—equal opportunity policies, quota systems of every kind, teacher

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hiring and firing policies, racially and religiously mixed student bodies. There will be a whole army of federal bureaucrats, not to mention state bureaucrats, policing every "private" school. The so-called private educational system will be swallowed up in a mountain of red tape. How much imagination does it take to see what is coming? Isn't it sufficient to look at what our independent private colleges are now going through? Can you imagine the kinds of controls in store for schools that are set up to permit an escape hatch for the crumbling state educational monopoly—the most horrendous visible failure of socialism in America?

Conclusion

The state is not about to adopt pseudo-market schemes unless the bureaucrats believe that the adoption of the scheme will remove competition from consistently independent private competitors. The state is not going to consider the latest pseudo-market proposal to come out of the graduate seminars of the pro-free market professors unless the scheme can be rewritten to enhance the sovereignty, power, and efficiency of those who would suppress the independence of private men. This should be the lesson of the age: statist ideologues and their tenured hirelings do not commit suicide voluntarily. They do not abandon the ideology of the control economy simply because some new scheme promises to make the government benign or reduce the tax burden of the public.

Pseudo-market schemes, promoted in the name of the free market, are adopted by the enemies of freedom for very specific purposes: to reduce the zones of freedom. Those who believe in increasing government power will adopt pseudo-market schemes only when they are convinced that the free market is too great a threat to pure, uncompromising bureaucratic failure.

The state may adopt vouchers for education on an experimental basis, in order to test the scheme. If it does foster independent education, vouchers will be scrapped. But they will not have to be scrapped. Vouchers may well become a permanent fixture of our government education system. If so, it will be for a reason: the school voucher offers vast new powers of control over a vibrant and growing independent school system that threatens to undercut government schools.

The great threat to freedom from school vouchers is that they strike at the heart of society: the family. As a pseudo-market device, they promise to be remarkably successful in destroying a tiny but important pure free market development. Private school administrators and most of the private colleges have been eager to receive federal aid; only a minority of a minority have held out against the lure of federal money. The lure of vouchers almost certainly will prove too great a temptation for thousands of our struggling parents and private schools. It may take another generation to recover from the defection of these schools, should that defection have an opportunity to manifest itself.

If vouchers are to be stopped, they will have to be stopped by parents who recognize the double taxation nature of the voucher scheme. Those who truly want independent schools and are willing to pay for them must not seek after vouchers, for vouchers are the very seal of doom for the independent school system. Pseudo-market schemes generally lead to anti-market results. Good results stem from good principles. Vouchers are an intellectual, moral, and educational disaster. They will not work to expand the realm of freedom. □

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THE FREEMAN
IDEAS ON LIBERTY

EDUCATION IN AMERICA

by Susan Alder

Heirs of the Reformation, the first settlers came to America with a firm belief in the necessity and desirability of education. The necessity was rooted in their belief in the "priesthood of all believers." The privilege of communion with and intimate access to God, which came through the reading of the Word and prayer, no longer remained the right of a priestly hierarchy but was open to all who believed. The responsibility of knowing God and thinking his thoughts after him required a thorough knowledge of his Holy Word, the Bible. This mandated that believers be literate; it also mandated that education be part of evangelism.

Parents bore the responsibility for seeing that children were literate, educated in the faith, and able to provide for themselves in society. This concept was rooted in the Biblical teaching that the family—not the church and not civil government—was created by God as the primary governing body in society. Well-governed families produced well-ordered societies. Thus, the family was the guardian of a society's character and culture.

Pastors and elders in the church were to encourage parents in their work and supplement it as necessary by instructing the parents or by direct involvement with the children when, for example, the pastor fulfilled his catechizing responsibilities or the parents asked the pastor to tutor the child. Often when several parents wanted the pastor to tutor their children, the pastor would instruct the children in a group instead of individually, thus forming a type of "school."

If parents were derelict in their duties, they opened themselves up to church—not civil—discipline, the goal of which would be that the parents fulfill their responsibilities as parents. Parents did not even consider that the civil government in any way had the responsibility or should assume the responsibility of providing for the education of children.

Even in the early years of the colonies, parents were able to choose from a variety of means to round out their children's education—private tutors (usually a minister), private schools, church schools, and apprenticeships. Private colleges were founded to provide higher education. Academies sprang up in larger towns to prepare students for college.

A notable exception to parental education came in the Massachusetts colony. A law passed by the General Court of the Massachusetts colony in 1642 required civil authorities to see that families educate children, servants, and apprentices. In 1647, the Massachusetts colony enacted a School Code which required appointment of a

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teacher in every township of 50 households. The teacher's salary was to be paid by parents or citizens of the community through a tax. Townships of 100 families were to set up grammar schools supported by the town.

Educator Samuel Blumenfeld says of these compulsory laws, "They were the ordinances of a religious community upholding the orthodoxy of its doctrines and providing for its future leadership. None of the other English colonies, with the exception of Connecticut which had been settled by Massachusetts Calvinists, enacted such education laws."[1] Blumenfeld also points out that the Bible commonwealth, peculiar to the Massachusetts colony, "lasted no more than sixty years."[2] With its demise and a relaxation of compliance with the old laws, private education boomed in the Massachusetts colony so that by 1720 private schools outnumbered public ones in Boston.

In 1636, John Cotton of Boston willed half of his property to establish a school for disadvantaged children and orphans. Thus the Boston Latin School became the first school established in America outside the home.[3] Educational endeavors in the colonies also included mission work. In 1649, the Corporation for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England reported 101 Indian missions in New England.[4] There were other mission agencies and missionaries active at this time as well.

Education at this time was not only Christian in that it included instruction in articles of Christian faith, but Christian also in that it saw all reality defined by precepts and principles laid out in the Bible. As historian Clinton Rossiter has said, "The colonial mind was thoroughly Christian in its approach to education, philosophy, and social theory...."[5]

The Great Awakening

Religious revivals occurred sporadically in the American colonies in the early 1700s. These culminated in The Great Awakening which spread from Nova Scotia to Georgia in the 1740s-1760s, touching the lives of the majority of colonists. The great preacher of the Awakening was George Whitefield. Prior to Whitefield's coming, traveling pastors spoke to congregations only at the invitation of their pastor. Whitefield bypassed this convention and preached in the open air to anyone who would listen. He insisted on a personal experience of salvation, and urged the laity to become involved in personal service to God. He insisted on an equality among believers and encouraged his listeners to question leadership if their teaching did not measure up to the truths of Scripture.

Since the revival took place wherever listeners could be gathered, no particular church had a claim to the converts. In fact, this revival brought converts into every fold. People who had seen God's hand at work apart from denominational affiliation became more accepting of each other—in spite of religious controversies that arose during this time. Historians have pointed to this time of revival as the beginning of a Protestant consensus among Americans.

The number of lay ministries increased. Many were formed by people from different denominational backgrounds who found they could work together in a common cause without a common theology. Among the ministries were schools for Indians, Negroes, and children of indentured servants.[6] Likewise, more colleges were formed to handle the swell of young men going into the ministry as a result of the revival. Presbyterians were especially active at this time establishing schools like William Tennent's "Log College" (1727).[7]

According to one historian, "After 1750, a real flourishing of independent educational efforts seems to have swept through the colonies. New secondary academies, a proliferation of free lance teachers in the towns, often young ministers, sometimes formerly indentured and without congregations, began to spread a new educational ethos."[8]

The number of schools continued to grow in pre-revolutionary America. By far, the majority were maintained by the churches and either provided educational opportunities for children of the church or for the

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A GOOD EDUCATION

Every period of life has its peculiar temptations and dangers. Men and women of age usually object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, and content themselves with a mediocrity of success. Youth is tempted to idle away its opportunities to do something and to become somebody. It is the gay and pleasant spring of life, the glad season of dreams and hopes. It is the forming and fixing period when the character assumes its permanent shape and color and the course is set for life.

A good education is the apprenticeship for life; in its widest sense it includes everything that exerts a beneficial influence on a young person and prepares him or her for virtuous and fruitful living. There are five criteria of a good education: correctness and precision in the use of language; gentle manners which give form and color to our lives; sound standards of morality and a character based on those standards; the power and habit of reflection; and the ability to work. In short, a good education develops the ability to speak and write effectively and imparts a sense of right, duty, and honor.

Language denotes the person. A refined character finds expression in refined language, a coarse character in coarse talk. Language shows the person; it springs from his or her innermost parts. Speak so that you may be seen!

Thoughts must be expressed in order to become clear. We speak, write or act out our thoughts. Feelings must have expression lest they remain vague and obscure. Language not only is the vehicle of thought and feeling but is also an efficient instrument. Thought expressed in a slipshod manner is likely to be slipshod; high-flown and bombastic speech probably springs from similar thought.

The study of a foreign language may be useful in learning one's own. It may take a few years to acquire a few tongues. To be eloquent in one takes the labor of a lifetime.

Manners are one of the great sources of influence given to man. The sign of good manners is calm, imperturbable conduct in all situations and actions. Good manners tend to be contagious; they usually are paid back in their own coins. A defect in manners may be a defect in upbringing or the result of pride, ill nature, and lack of sense. Many people ignore it as a small matter, but big decisions are often based on appearance and manners.

An important rule of good manners is to be silent about onself, to say little or nothing about oneself. An unerring sign of bad manners is the inclination of a person to speak in superlatives, to converse with heat or raise his voice. It is difficult to keep the company of such a person although he may speak the truth and pos-

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sess many other qualities.

Women are the natural guardians of good manners. A great German poet and philosopher gave this advice: "In all matters of manners, behavior and taste always consult a lady." A famous British philosopher expressed the same thought: "What better school for manners than the company of virtuous women."

Good manners and good morals are kindred qualities. Manners may differ from country to country but morality is the same everywhere. Parental training and guidance as well as religious instruction may lay a foundation of morality and instill a sense of meaning and purpose. They may impart dignity to labor, sanctity to marriage, brotherhood to man, and teach honesty, integrity, dependability, and perseverence in the face of obstacles and zeal in pursuit of a goal.

Good morals are the basis of our republican government and the foundation of the private-property order. Moral laws confirm individual dignity and responsibility. "Thou shalt not steal," "thou shalt not kill or coerce," and "thou shalt not covet," or "bear false witness" are the very foundations of a peaceful political order and a productive economic system.

The power and habit of reflection is a predominant element in all humans. It renders us human and distinguishes us essentially and generically from the animal world. Surely, we also are creatures of impulse, emotion, and instinct. But we act wisely when we foster the cultivation of reason. Wise men are instructed and guided by reason which is their intellectual eye.

Most people do not live by their own stock of reason because it may be rather small. They do well availing themselves of the general bank of reason which may be available on all levels of education.

Religion, though not discoverable by human reason, may yet be in accordance with it. Religion leaves the realm of reason only where human reason faces its own limitations. As the eye has its limits of vision power, so does human reason have its confine in comprehensive power. It does not create anything but merely discerns the objects in its sight.

The ability to work is the key to human existence and well-being. Work is as much a necessity to man as eating and sleeping, for he would soon perish without the economic production which depends on his power of work and thought. There can be no progress, physical or intellectual, without effort, which means work.

Individual success builds solidly on work, hard work and long hours of work. Men rarely fail from overwork; they often succumb to laziness and dissipation.

Good education develops the ability to make a living and live well. It seeks to improve young minds so that they may think for themselves. It teaches self-control which is the habit of controlling passion, prejudice and evil tendencies. It thereby does much to abolish poverty and misery from their lives and crimes from society.

A good education usually begins in the home. It is what is commonly called "informal education," the parental training and guidance by our elders. They shape our values and morals, and set us on our way.

Formal education is a conscious organized effort to impart the skills needed for social living and functioning. It is a natural extension of the informal education by parents, a continuation of instruction begun in the home and continued in the classroom and lecture hall. Although it shifts the task from mother and father to teacher and instructor, it does not shift the moral obligation from the parents to political authorities, nor does it negate parental rights. They spring from the most fundamental human relationship, that between parents and their children.

Hans F. Sennholz

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Forthcoming Events at FEE

Round-Table Discussions

Every first Saturday of the month, beginning in March, several well-known individuals will lead the discussion of a vital issue of the day. Each round-table meeting will be preceded by a reception and dinner beginning at 5 p.m. Charge: $30.00. Attendance limited to 50 persons.

March 6 Round-Table

Drs. Hans Sennholz, John Robbins, and Doug Bandow will open a discussion of "federal stimuli and pump priming." Special emphasis will be placed on practices and policies.

April 3 Round-Table

Drs. Hans Sennholz, Ron Paul, and Llewellyn Rockwell will open a discussion of "rituals of tax reform" and recent changes in federal law.

May 1 Round-Table

Drs. Hans Sennholz, John A. Sparks, and Clarence Carson will discuss "illiberal education" in its many facets and forms.

Weekend Seminars

Every third weekend of the month beginning in March, a well-known scholar and writer will hold a seminar in his field of expertise. He will begin with a lecture on Friday evening, followed by a reception and dinner, and continue his presentation on Saturday. The seminar will close with a dinner on Saturday.

Tuition, two nights' lodging, and food, including Sunday breakfast — $260.00 Attendance limited to 40 persons.

March 19-21 Seminar

Robert J. Bidinotto, *Reader's Digest* Staff Writer and author of *Crime and Consequences*, will examine and sit in judgment of the criminal justice system.

Seminars at FEE

March 25-27	Undergraduate Seminar
June 13-18	Seminar in Austrian Economics
July 12-17	Summer Seminar
August 9-14	Summer Seminar

For information and application forms, please write to FEE.

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The Foundation for Economic Education invites applications for a few positions as interns (male or female) who will live at FEE headquarters, studying the freedom philosophy, learning to publish a celebrated journal and great books, and preparing for advanced degrees. Small stipends will cover living expenses.

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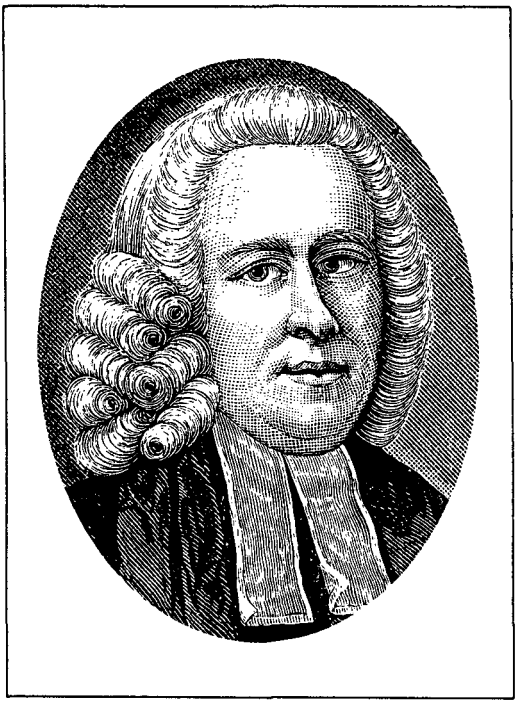

George Whitefield
(1714–1770)

poor. The number of charity schools increased in proportion to the influx of immigrants. Consequently, charity schools were more numerous in the northern colonies.

Education in the South was completely private until 1730, and by 1776, only five public schools existed in the South.[9] Educational opportunities were provided for poor children through apprenticeship programs. Tutors were popular among wealthy planters. Plantation schoolhouses were common where children, not only of the owner, but neighborhood children came to learn.

In 1783, Noah Webster wrote his "Blue-backed Speller" which taught principles of religion and morals in addition to language. Authors Beliles and McDowell comment that the "Blue-backed Speller," which sold over 100 million copies in a century, "did more for American education than any other single book, except the Bible."[10]

Secondary schools designed especially to prepare young men for college dotted the colonies. However, tutors were often used in private homes to prepare the college bound. Nine colleges were in service on the eve of the American Revolution: Harvard, Yale, William and Mary, King's at New York, the College of New Jersey at Princeton, the College of Philadelphia, Rhode Island College, Queen's, and Dartmouth.[11]

Literacy abounded in the colonies prior to and after the Revolution. The Frenchman Pierre Du Pont de Nemours described what he saw in America in a book written at the request of Vice President Thomas Jefferson, entitled *National Education in the United States of America*. Having surveyed education in America, De Nemours wrote:

> The United States are more advanced in their educational facilities than most countries.
>
> They have a large number of primary schools; and as their paternal affection protects young children from working in the fields, it is possible to send them to the school-master—a condition which does not prevail in Europe.
>
> Most young Americans, therefore, can read, write and cipher. Not more than four in a thousand are unable to write legibly—even neatly; while in Spain, Portugal, Italy, only a sixth of the population can read; in Germany, even in France, not more than a third; in Poland, about two men in a hundred; and in Russia not one in two hundred.
>
> England, Holland, the Protestant Cantons of Switzerland, more nearly approach the standard of the United States, because in those countries the Bible is read; and in that form of religion the sermons and liturgy in the language of the people tend to increase and formulate ideas of responsibility. Controversy, also, has developed argumentation and has thus given room for the exercise of logic.
>
> In America, a great number of people read the Bible, and all the people read a newspaper. The fathers read aloud to their children while breakfast is being prepared—a task which occupies the mothers for three-quarters of an hour every morning. And as the newspapers of the United States are filled with all sorts of narratives—comments on matters po-

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litical, physical, philosophic; information on agriculture, the arts, travel, navigation; and also extracts from all the best books in America and Europe—they disseminate an enormous amount of information, some of which is helpful to the young people, especially when they arrive at an age when the father resigns his place as reader in favor of the child who can best succeed him.

It is because of this kind of education that the Americans of the United States, without having more great men than other countries, have the great advantage of having a larger proportion of moderately well informed men; although their education may seem less perfect, it is nevertheless better and more equally distributed. [12]

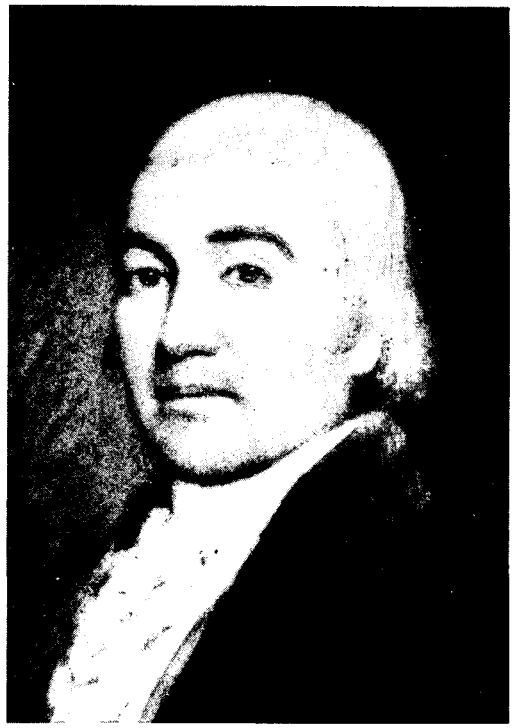
After the Revolution

The victory of the Revolution and the great freedoms guaranteed by the new Constitution were made possible in part by the consensus of thought and purpose which emerged from America's first national event—the Great Awakening. After the Revolution, Americans thought their Republic could be maintained only by continuing with the same national solidarity.

America's first challenge to its new national solidarity came in the nineteenth century with the westward expansion, the growth of industrialized cities, and the influx of immigrants. Many feared those moving west would return to barbaric ways in the wilderness. The quick expansion resulted in several states being added to the union, thus shifting the balance of political power away from the East.

The churches were challenged on two fronts—proclamation of the Gospel to a rapidly expanding audience and education of the newly converted. Voluntary societies were formed to help meet these needs. Some were involved in providing missionaries to preach the word, some supplied teachers, some helped publish and supply books and tracts for the new converts; others were involved in humanitarian activities.

Books and tracts became important items



Noah Webster
(1758–1843)

for traveling pastors; they provided a continuing education in the absence of the pastor. Voluntary societies were formed to supply these. Most notable among the agencies formed at this time were the American Bible Society in 1816 and the American Tract Society in 1825.

Missionary and educational societies were formed to establish churches and train ministers. After the Ordinances of 1785 and 1787 set aside land in every township for the maintenance of public grammar schools, ministers served as schoolmasters until the schools could be made operational. In 1824, the American Sunday School Union began teaching the "Three R's" in addition to Bible lessons to children who might not otherwise attend school. Churches, in particular Presbyterian and Congregationalist, were very active in founding academies and colleges for higher education.

Textbooks relied on a Biblical understanding of reality and a Protestant understanding of history. Webster's famous dictionary of the American language, published in 1828, was the first American dictionary

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and defined words from a Biblical perspective using Scriptural references. Webster's "Blue-backed Speller" continued to be used. In 1836, William Holmes McGuffey published his *McGuffey Reader*s. One hundred twenty-two million copies were sold in 75 years. Like Webster, McGuffey undergirded the content of his books with Biblical concepts and morality.

The Lure of State Schools

With the variety in educational options in early America, tax-financed schools did not receive widespread support. The Massachusetts Colony's early attempt at this type of public school failed. For years afterward, Massachusetts communities disobeyed legislative directives to establish schools, choosing instead to educate their children through private means.

Although some of the early statesmen, including Washington and Jefferson, had spoken in favor of some type of national education, there was little interest among the general public.[13] In 1789, Massachusetts passed a law regarding establishment of tax-supported schools. Connecticut and New Hampshire passed similar laws. In 1796, Virginia enacted a state law establishing a state school system. Since the legislation was noncompulsory, Virginians neither taxed themselves for, nor established, tax-supported schools.

Although it theoretically left educational opportunities up to the states, the federal government in the Ordinances of 1785 and 1787 set aside land (one square mile) in every township. The income from the use of this land was to be earmarked for the maintenance of public grammar schools. Samuel Blumenfeld pointed out, "While the purpose of the land grants was to provide incentives to those who wished to establish communities in sparsely settled areas, the net effect was to encourage state governments to become involved in subsidizing education."[14]

None of the legislation passed in these years was compulsory. Therefore, parents continued to educate their children at home, with tutors, or in private or church schools. Many local governments paid tuition for poor students to attend the schools of their choice. Many missionary agencies built and maintained schools for the poor in the large cities.

For years, it appeared the only strong advocates of state schools in America were the Unitarians of Boston, who denied Christian doctrines and accepted Rousseau's philosophy that negative behavior in society was a result of mis-education—not man's fallen nature. The Unitarians felt that man, who was essentially good, could be saved from the evils of society if he were properly educated. Samuel Blumenfeld has documented the Unitarian success in its press toward compulsory, government controlled, tax-supported state schools in his book *Is Public Education Necessary?*

The Nineteenth Century

Christian efforts to evangelize, educate, and minister to the rapidly growing population continued to be successful. As America approached the 1830s, educational opportunities abounded. Anyone who truly wanted an education could have one. Although common schools were in existence at this time in various places, most parents (even those paying taxes to support the common schools) continued to send their children to private institutions. In December 1832, H. D. Robinson bemoaned the prevalence of Christianity in the culture of the day: "Christian newspapers are numerous and well supported, Christian prayer meetings, Christian Sunday Schools, Christian public and private academies and universities, and various other mighty engines of Christian influence, are planted like the artillery of Heaven against the ramparts of reason and truth."[15]

The educational system which was in place was obviously working very well. The majority of Americans were not interested in replacing it.

But the Unitarians would not be stopped. Eventually the resolve of the majority began to dissolve as the push for state education

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continued. Three factors became crucial in convincing Americans to reject the educational freedom that had built the greatest nation on earth. First, those interested in state education enlisted the support of teachers and clergy—even conservative clergy. While instilling doubt about the system that was successfully working, these spokesmen were effective lobbyists who won approval for their ideals in state legislatures before they were accepted by the citizens.

Second, approximately 35 million immigrants came to America in the nineteenth century. Unlike the first colonists, these were mostly poor and uneducated. Few, except the Irish, spoke English; many were Roman Catholic—whom many citizens thought presented a threat not only to American Protestantism, but the American way of life. Many wondered how these people would learn to participate not only in the American way of life, but the American system of government. Questions arose about the national loyalty of the Roman Catholics since they were served by priests whose allegiance was to Rome.[16]

Third, a move away from the religious principles of the colonists not only left the majority unprepared to refute the rationale behind the state school movement, but made them particularly receptive to it during times of stress. Bernard Bailyn has pointed out, "Public education as it was in the late nineteenth century, and is now, had not grown from seventeenth-century seeds; it was a new and unexpected genus whose ultimate character could not have been predicted and whose emergence had troubled well-disposed, high-minded people."

In spite of the success that had accompanied individual, missionary, and church educational endeavors, many Christians, encouraged by the Unitarians, began to look longingly toward the state school. Legislation forming these schools and taxes for funding them were considered a small price to pay to control the new elements threatening their "Christian culture."

Many Christians were persuaded that the state schools were the true savior of their society. Bible reading was incorporated into the new state schools—albeit in a "nonsectarian" way. Prayer was also a daily activity. Because the schools were to reflect Protestant plurality, denominational differences were not discussed. The burgeoning Sunday School movement, it was thought, gave the denominations the opportunity to see that children were taught the finer points of denominationalism.

The preservation of "Christian" America was a fundamental reason why Christians supported the state school movement in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many Christian parents were comfortable sending their children to the state schools, because they believed they would receive instruction in religious and moral values that matched their own. But in looking to the state schools, Christians made two costly mistakes: They turned from persuasion to coercion, from evangelism to state education for the preservation of their society. They also abandoned their own parental responsibilities.

Dissenters

One of the first groups to feel left out of the new state school system was the Catholics. The exclusive use of the King James Bible and the anti-Catholic references in religious practice and history classes forced Catholics to establish parochial schools to preserve their religious distinctives. As early as 1829 bishops urged establishment of Catholic schools. In 1884, instead of simply urging, the bishops commanded their formation. Thus the Catholic parochial school system came into being. Thomas F. Sullivan has pointed out, "In many places it was customary that when new parishes were founded, the first building to be erected was the school. Construction of the church, rectory, and convent could all wait until the school was operating and its debt at least partially retired."[17]

Other religious groups protested the rising public school movement and continued to provide educational opportunities for their children. Among them were the Amish,

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Episcopalian, Quaker, Mennonite, Moravian, Lutheran, and Presbyterian. Those groups of the Anabaptist tradition (Amish, Mennonite, Brethren) were most consistent in insisting upon and providing for distinctive educational opportunities for their children. They understood it to be the only way they could hope to preserve their societal structure in the oceans of diversity that were sweeping across the country.

One hundred forty-two Swedish Lutheran congregations maintained 56 parochial schools in 1870; however, preservation of the Swedish language appeared to be the main goal of these efforts. Norwegian Lutheran clergy seeking to preserve their distinctives clashed with church members who wanted to become part of the New World. For the most part Lutherans tended to favor state schools. The debate was eased when Luther's writings were interpreted to show that church and state had separate functions and mandates from Scripture—the state receiving the educational mandate. More pressure was put on Lutheran schools, and the anti-German sentiment during World War I forced the closing of many of their schools. It became necessary to show loyalty to the American way of life.[18]

Presbyterians historically had been strong advocates of Christian education. Their activity after the Great Awakening resulted in the establishment of primary and mission schools as well as colleges. Not only did they provide educational opportunities for children in their congregations, they used education as a means of mission activity. But when interest in the common schools arose, certain clergy were strong supporters of the state schools. These pastors, like many others, thought the Sunday School system was sufficient to counteract the nondenominational instruction of the religious education in the state schools.

However, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1847 received a report on parochial schools which concluded, "our State schools, in their best estate, can teach no higher morals or religion, than what may be called the *average* of public morals and religion. So long as the majority do not receive the truths of grace, State schools, their creature, can never teach the Gospel. In some States, it is already a matter of debate whether the word of God shall be admitted, and even if this were settled to our wishes, it needs scarcely be said our necessities demand something far higher than the bare reading of the Bible. In our State schools—Bible or no Bible—we have every assurance that Christ, and grace, and Gospel liberty, cannot, by authority, be so much as named; and without these there can be no Christian education."[19]

This General Assembly resolved to circulate copies of this report to its churches and expressed its firm conviction that every congregation "establish within its bounds one or more primary schools, under the care of the Session of the Church, in which together with the usual branches of secular learning, the truths and duties of our holy religion shall be assiduously inculcated."

In spite of this plea, the Presbyterian parochial movement of 1846–1870 was very disappointing, decimated by the rise of common schools, the division of the church into Northern and Southern branches, the Civil War, and theological disunity.

Northern Baptist efforts to establish academies in the late nineteenth century also met with failure. This failure was attributed to competition from state schools as well as a denominational ambivalence to the state school system.[20]

The final victory for state schools came as the states began to enact laws of compulsory attendance. Prior to the Civil War, only Massachusetts had such laws. After the Civil War other states began enacting them. By 1900, 31 states had some form of compulsory education law. As these laws became more coercive, parents lost more control over their children's education to the point that they had no say in which state school they could attend.

The Twentieth Century

Catholic Schools. Over the years, Catholic schools grew in number and enrollment until the 1970s when many families moved

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from the cities to suburbia. Unfortunately, the high costs of building and maintaining schools resulted in fewer being built to care for the newly placed suburbanites. Schools in the cities began to close because of lack of enrollment and funds to keep the schools open.

Today, many Catholic schools in the cities have received a new lease on life due to enrollments of inner city children who are not Catholic. Many of these children are from poor families who sacrifice to send their children to the parochial school where they can receive a quality education in a safe environment.

Protestant Day Schools. The Supreme Court decisions in 1962 and 1963 which removed prayer and Bible reading from state schools woke many Christian parents from their slumber. They began evaluating the state schools and found them wanting—religiously, morally, and intellectually. The American Protestantism of the nineteenth century had been replaced with the secular humanism of the twentieth. Parents began to seek educational alternatives for their children.

Once again, small private and church operated schools began to adorn the American educational landscape. James C. Carper has said of private Christian schools, "Not only do these institutions currently constitute the most rapidly expanding segment of formal education in the United States, but they also represent the first *widespread* secession from the public school pattern since the establishment of Catholic schools in the nineteenth century."[21]

Although these Christian schools are diverse and are supported by a wide variety of churches, they share two key factors: They profess the centrality of Christ as the Son of God and a personal Savior, and they profess their dependence on the Bible in their educational endeavors.

A wealth of Christian curricula has been developed which teaches subjects from a Biblical perspective. Science is based on a creationist perspective. History is viewed as the record of God's interaction with man. The "Three R's" receive much emphasis. Reading is usually taught by the phonetic method. McGuffey's *Readers* and Webster's original dictionary have been reprinted as these schools look for texts with a strong Christian influence. Bible study and worship are part of the curriculum. Many topics which receive much attention in the state schools—such as sex education—are left to the parents. Thus, more of the school day is devoted to learning content. Overall, the academic achievements of students attending these schools is at least equal to, and more often higher than, the academic achievements of students in state schools.

Many parents and churches consider their involvement in the modern Christian school movement to be reclaiming what was lost in the last century. They try, as much as possible, to keep themselves free from government interference. Many refuse to report enrollment figures to state or federal education agencies on religious grounds. Thus, it is difficult to get a precise count of the exact number of these new schools and the number of students attending them. However, a 1987–88 *Schools and Staffing Survey* done by the National Center for Educational Statistics for the U.S. Department of Education estimated there were 9,527 Catholic schools and 12,133 "Other Religious schools" in America at the time of the survey.

As Christians resumed their responsibilities for educating their children, they found the state reluctant to give up control. In 1978, the State of Nebraska threatened to take children away from parents who chose to educate them at the Calvary Academy; eventually 22 Christian schools were caught up in a seven-year conflict with the state. In 1983, in Louisville, Nebraska, seven fathers spent 93 days in jail because they sent their children to a Christian school. In other places, Christian schools have been harassed by state officials because their teachers were not state certified—even though many teachers in Christian schools feel that to be state certified would be a sin. Zoning restrictions have been applied to stop churches from beginning Christian schools.

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In addition to government harassment, Christian schools have had to cope with allegations of racism, inferior instruction, as well as religious fanaticism. Nevertheless, the schools continue to grow.

Many support agencies for Christian schools have developed over the years. These groups provide a wide range of services including providing accreditation services, curriculum, placement services, and legislative warnings and updates. They also inform parents and schools of measures they can take which will make them less susceptible to litigation and stand by them when they are threatened. In addition to these agencies dealing with Christian school issues, there are many dealing with religious freedom on a broader level—such as family and parental rights—as well as Christian legal associations ready to defend Christians whose religious rights are threatened.

Dr. John Holmes, Director for Government Affairs for the Association of Christian Schools International, said forced federal mandates present the newest threat to Christian schools, in particular, mandates which deal with sexual non-discrimination. Last year, his organization alerted ACSI schools in 22 states about sexual non-discrimination bills. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has begun to step in to defend workers in Christian schools who feel the school has violated their religious rights. Six cases ended up in court last year. Dr. Holmes said that the very fact that the EEOC accepts these cases is significant because Christian schools, which historically operate on very tight budgets, can be destroyed by legal fees.

It is estimated that approximately 12 percent of American children are in private schools, 80 percent of which are of some religious affiliation, the remaining 20 percent non-religious. It is estimated that approximately 630,000 children are being educated through home-schooling. These figures represent only those who have already opted for alternatives. A 1992 Gallup poll showed that 70 percent of Americans support choice in education. Christian parents have been the vanguard of the educational choice and parental rights movement. Perhaps many more will learn the lesson that school and state should be separate, just as church and state are separate. □

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THE FREEMAN
IDEAS ON LIBERTY

DISESTABLISHING PUBLIC EDUCATION

by Anna David

Lawrence Seals is a cheerful 11-year old who lives in an urban West-Side Chicago neighborhood. Once a gang member, he was one of 150 inner-city children who made up the class of 1988 at the Corporate/Community School of America (C/CSA).

Created and funded by corporations, C/CSA is a "break-the-mold" school, a reform laboratory aiming to find answers to the problems that plague inner-city urban schools—crime, high dropout rates, violence, poor academic achievement. More than 80 percent of C/CSA's students come from single-parent families; 60 percent live below federal poverty levels. "It was terrible," says Lawrence of his days in the gang. "At least I didn't kill anybody."

But last summer, weary of resisting the gangs who tormented him on his daily walk to and from school, Lawrence announced to C/CSA's principal, Elaine Mosely, he was dropping out. Her response: a scalding reminder of what lay ahead if he walked out on his education and his future. Less than two hours after Dr. Mosely pleaded with her pupil to stay in school, Lawrence delivered to her office a promise to come to class—a promise he has kept. His handwritten note brought tears to her eyes. "Some kids would respond to pressure with a knife or a gun. But Lawrence responded—in writing. He has grown in inner strength. It's a profound example of how we can teach children to respond to the challenge of the streets."

C/CSA is run much like a business, with a 15-member board of directors, seven of whom are corporate executives. Their leadership, which includes aggressive management of financial resources and continual student performance measurement, has resulted in a school that boasts a 97 percent average daily attendance rate and a majority of students at or above national grade-level average performance levels. Last year, for example, nearly 88 percent of the school's six-year-olds were at or above the national grade-level average in reading. By comparison, 26 percent of Chicago public school six-year-olds had reached the grade-level average. Similar results appear in math and vocabulary. In addition, C/CSA operates year-round for about $1,000 less than the $6,000 spent per pupil in Chicago public elementary schools.

C/CSA is a working example of a market solution to the national education crisis. While public education remains mired in poor academic performance and financial crises, the private sector is proving that free market enterprises are vastly more efficient, more creative, and more responsive than government bureaucracies.

Throughout the United States, elementary and secondary school enrollments continue to rise while many states struggle just

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to prevent an existing budget deficit from widening. Overall education expenditures are also sky-rocketing. At $600 billion, or 12 percent of Gross National Product, the United States spends more on education than do most competitor countries whose students outperform ours on standardized tests.

Corporate Involvement in Education

By 1989–90, more than half (51 percent) of all school districts in the United States had entered into public-private partnerships, involving about 2.6 million volunteers, with an estimated value of $225 million, an increase of 125 percent since 1986, says the National Association of Partners in Education. About 30 million, or 65 percent of all students in 1989–90 attended schools in districts that had partnerships with business. According to the U.S. Department of Education, about 50 percent of these partnerships involve the donation of goods and services; 25 percent the donation of money; and 25 percent a combination of goods, services, and money.

Indeed, business has given enormous amounts of money to public education but has rarely known what, if any, good it has done. A 1991 survey by SchoolMatch, an Ohio-based consulting firm that matches business with public schools and subsequently measures performance, shows that a majority of companies that give financial resources to schools have little idea of the outcomes of that investment. But that's changing. The private sector is seeking a return on investment—educated and educable workers. Creating innovative models, it is showing it can provide the programs necessary to encourage educational excellence.

Private companies have contracted to provide ancillary services in education for decades. Transportation, maintenance, labor negotiations, standardized testing, data processing, and professional services of lawyers, architects, and consultants are frequently provided by the private sector. Current patterns in private provision of school lunch programs, for example, suggest 30 percent growth per year during the next 10 years, according to the Reason Foundation's *Privatization 1992*.

Private Teaching Practices

In the late 1980s, a renegade band of teachers decided to follow suit. Abandoning the security of tenure and union contracts to venture into private practice, these teachers "live or die" by the results they provide, says Chris Yelich, founder and president of the American Association of Educators in Private Practice (AAEPP). "Competition and accountability have led to innovation, efficiency, flexibility, and diversity," she says. "If schools are not happy with the result, the contract is not renewed."

Public educators often lack the incentive to produce results, to innovate, to be efficient, to make the kinds of difficult changes that private firms operating in a competitive market must make to survive. Private practice teaching breaks this monopoly and significantly upgrades the professional status of teachers, leading them to be directly accountable to their clients—and either succeed or fail.

Some limited contracting is now permitted in Wisconsin, where AAEPP has more than 100 members, and also Michigan, Minnesota, Maryland, Florida, Illinois, and North Carolina. It is in Raleigh, North Carolina, that one private firm, Dialogos International, received a contract with the Wake County Public Schools to teach French, German, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, and Japanese in kindergarten through fifth grade. This was after the state passed a law in 1985 requiring all children in grades K-5 to study a foreign language by the 1994–95 school year. The school board estimates the annual cost of a contract with a Dialogos teacher, at about $19,000, is 30 to 50 percent less than the annual salary of a classroom teacher. And if the county is not happy with the language instruction, it can choose not to renew the contract. In the current system, schools find it nearly impossible to fire an incompetent teacher.

Since 1986, teachers have opened a vari-

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ety of private practices. In Milwaukee, former elementary school teacher Kathy Harrell-Patterson opened her own school, Learning Enterprise of Wisconsin, to help young mothers improve basic learning skills. "No one school can meet the needs of every child," she says. "We're catching those kids who fall through the cracks and unfortunately, there are quite a few of them."

Others run computer-assisted learning classes, instruction in foreign languages, math, science, and music, to gifted or remedial students, or through methods such as experiential learning or peer-teaching. However, obstacles encountered by private practice teachers suggest problems are inherent in joint operations. While more individual teachers favor the option of private practice, their unions have labeled it "union busting." And while school boards are permitted to contract, agreement from the local union is imperative or boards could face a strike.

For many, the real goal is to get government out of schools altogether. A handful of private firms have made major inroads into private practice. Aware that many public schools are only too relieved to be rid of problem students, one private, for-profit firm, Ombudsman International, provides education to dropout students. For a $3,000 to $4,000 per-student fee—about half the public school per-student fee—Ombudsman boasts a 90 percent retention rate.

Effective Private Alternatives

Private alternative education is more than twice as cost-effective as running a public school district-sponsored program, says Ombudsman president James Boyle. For example, an average district-sponsored program in 1991–92 cost $428,000 for 60 students—a cost of $7,200 per student; next year the cost is expected to rise to $492,000, or $8,200 per student. The company's schools, housed in shopping centers or business and industrial parks, are staffed by certified teachers, and the pupil-teacher ratio is no higher than 10 to 1. Ombudsman teachers assess each student in English, reading, and mathematics before entering the program, and develop individualized instruction. Students work at their own pace three hours each day, five days a week, receiving lessons and tests on video-display terminals. Students enroll in an Ombudsman program on a private-tuition basis, or are referred by school districts who retain the remainder of state aid for their students after meeting the private company's fee.

Another private firm, Education Alternatives, Inc. (EAI), runs its own private schools, and also has two major contracts to manage public schools. EAI provides its own teaching program, and with the help of subcontractors KPMG-Peat Marwick and Johnson Controls World Service, aims to cut 25 percent from the public schools' administration and operating budgets. Chairman David Bennett knows it can be done; after all, EAI's own private schools operate efficiently for significantly less money while its students outperform those in the public schools.

Corporate philanthropy, once a well-intentioned, feel-good public-relations exercise, is increasingly meeting education needs. For example, the $200 million New American School Development Corporation, made up entirely of private grants, is the single largest non-federally funded education project in U.S. history.

In addition, 1991 saw the birth of privately funded education scholarship programs—private funds for low-income students to attend private schools. Beginning with Golden Rule Insurance Company's scholarships for low-income Minneapolis students to attend private or parochial schools of choice, other corporations and foundations have followed suit. This year, Kinetic Concepts, Inc., USAA Federal Savings Bank, and the San Antonio Express News; Partners Advancing Values in Education and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation in Milwaukee; and the Vandenberg Foundation in Michigan, all announced similar plans to provide scholarships for low-income students. Golden Rule Insurance Company's Choice Charitable Trust spokesman, Tim

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Erghott, expects half a dozen more programs within the year. These scholarship plans create incentives for parents to investigate schools, and for private schools to respond to parents' preferences.

The growth in private sector provision of education services is evident, too, in the growth of for-profit learning centers that provide after-school remedial instruction and summer school programs. Parents, increasingly concerned about the quality of public schools, want to supplement their children's public education with academic courses and learning skills in a small classroom setting they feel the public schools cannot match.

Since 1980 almost 500 Sylvan Learning Centers, an international franchise chain nicknamed the "McDonald's of Education," have opened. All centers work on the same formula: individualized basic-skills instruction after school and during weekends and holidays with an emphasis on accountability. The student begins with a two-hour battery of standard diagnostic tests, including examinations to determine if the student has any hearing or vision problems. Based on the student's ability level, instructors prepare a curriculum that may include workbook exercises, audio-visual aids and computer-aided instructional programs. Standardized exams are used frequently to check progress. Sylvan not only provides the basic instruction many parents feel their children do not receive in the public classroom, but while public schools continue to release students at 3 p.m. when many parents are still at work, Sylvan ensures the students' after-school time is spent in an enthusiastic learning environment.

Private summer schools are experiencing a boom largely due to widespread cutbacks in public school summer programs. In fact, since 1986 private summer school programs—costing as much as $5,000 for six weeks—have increased by 55 percent, according to Peterson's national directory of private summer schools and camps for children and teenagers.

Some of the most successful private schools that already exist are religious or church schools. Of the 5.2 million children in private education, for example, more than half attend Catholic schools where students typically score two grade levels above the national average in math, reading, vocabulary, and writing, and where the dropout rate is estimated at less than one percent. This compares dramatically with the national average dropout rate of 29 percent. As a result, 86 percent of Catholic high school graduates go on to college, compared with the national average of 57 percent. According to the National Council on American Private Education, Lutheran schools teach an estimated 247,000 students (1988 figures); interdenominational Christian schools, 233,000; Baptist, 335,000; Jewish, 158,000; and Episcopal, 85,000 students.

In the meantime, a growing number of parents aren't waiting for public education to improve, or for vouchers, or chain-store style private schools. Instead, increasing numbers are teaching their children at home. An estimated 350,000 children are now homeschooled, compared to only 15,000 in the early 1980s, says the Department of Education. Although homeschooling is legal in 50 states, the laws vary widely. In some states, parents must be certified teachers; in others, parents must only notify the district of their intentions, and have the curriculum approved by school officials. The rise in homeschooling is a dramatic illustration of parents ultimately exercising market choice.

After an era when business leaders, as Chicago's Teach America president Patrick J. Keleher says, "seem to have been mesmerized by the titles, the jargon, and perhaps the flag-waving that comes out of the incredibly powerful education establishment," competitive market principles are now being increasingly applied to education. Performance expectations and increased academic achievement are the returns on investment the private sector seeks, and in doing so, it provides the economic reality check public education in this country so desperately needs. □

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THE FREEMAN
IDEAS ON LIBERTY

EDUCATION FOR ONE'S OWN SAKE

by Leonard E. Read

In previous chapters I have tried to demonstrate that government is organized police force and that its function is to keep the peace; that education is a peaceful, creative, productive pursuit of the type disastrously affected by government intervention. Now, were government to step aside in education as it has stepped aside in religion—that is, if compulsory attendance, state-dictated curricula, and forcible collection of the wherewithal to pay the school bill were omitted—education would be left to the free market.

Were this break with tradition to take place, what would happen?

Strange as it may first appear, no one can know! Some will say that this admission is a retreat from my argument that education would be improved if left to the free, competitive market. On the contrary, it is in support of the free market as the sole, effective means of improving education.

If you are compelled to do as someone else dictates, if unnatural obstacles are placed in your way, if you are relieved of responsibilities, I can at least predict that you will not function to your fullest in a creative sense. But no one can even roughly predict what wondrous things you will create if released from restraints and dictation, that is, if freed from obstacles. Indeed, you cannot make such predictions about yourself. What new idea will you have tomorrow? What invention? What will you do if a new necessity, an unexpected responsibility, presents itself? We know that creativity will be increased, nothing more. . . .

Religious Freedom

In the United States, we have rejected the use of the police force for the purpose of determining one's religion. Are high moral standards and improving attitudes toward one's life and the lives of others—prime objects of religion—of less value than knowing how to read or to write or to add two and two? Indeed, are not both education and religion intimately personal matters, one as much as the other? Is the education of another any more of my or your business than the religion of another?

In many countries—certainly in the U.S.A.—the idea of (1) being compelled by government to attend church, or (2) having the government dictate clergymen's subject matter, or (3) having the expenses of religious institutions forcibly collected by the tax man, would be an affront to the citizens'

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This article is adapted from a chapter in Mr. Read's book, Anything That's Peaceful, *originally published in 1964 by The Foundation for Economic Education.* Anything That's Peaceful *has been reprinted by FEE and is available in paperback for $10.95.*

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intelligence. Why do people believe in applying police force to education and letting religion rest on self-determination? Logically, there appears to be no basis for the distinction. Tradition, custom—living with a mistake so long that reason is rarely brought to bear—may be the explanation.

Being a disbeliever in the management by the police force of any creative activity, I have on countless occasions asked individuals in various occupational levels if they would let their children go uneducated were all governmental compulsions removed. The answers given me have always been in the same vein. If you will try this yourself, you will be impressed with how alike the answers are: "Do you think I am a fool? I would no more let my children go without an education than I would let them go without shoes and stockings. *But* some forms of compulsion are necessary, for there are many persons who do not have the same concern for their children as I have."

And there you have it! Police force is never needed to manage my education, only necessary for the other fellow! The other fellow's weakness—the possibility of his having no interest in himself or in his offspring—is far more imaginary than real. It is, for the most part, a fiction of the compulsory, collectivistic myth. Should you doubt this, try to find that rare exception, "the other fellow." If every parent in this country were to consider authoritarianism in education as applying only to himself and could divorce from his thinking the "incompetency of others," there would be no police force applied to American education. Let any reader of this thesis, regardless of wealth status, honestly try this exercise and arrive at any other conclusion!

A Parental Responsibility

A child, from the time of birth until adulthood, is but the extension of the parent's responsibility. The child can no more be "turned out to pasture" for his education than for his morals or his manners or his sustenance. The primary parental responsibility for the child's education cannot properly be shifted to anyone else; responsible parenthood requires that some things remain for one's own attentions, no matter how enticingly and powerfully specialization and division of labor may beckon one. And, the education of one's children is a cardinal case in point.

This does not mean parents should not have help—a lot of specialized assistance—with their educational responsibility. It does mean that the parent cannot be relieved of the educational responsibility without injury to himself—that is, without injury to his own person and thus to the child who is but the extension of his personal responsibility.

Police Force Interjected

How does the application of police force to education bear on this question? It tends to relieve parents of educational responsibilities, including the study that might have involved themselves. Compulsion—police force as boss—says, in effect, to the parent: "Forget about the education of your child. We, acting as government, will compel the child to go to school regardless of how you think on the matter. Do not fret unduly about what the child will study. We, the agents of compulsion, have that all arranged. And don't worry about the financing of education. We, the personnel of authority, will take the fruits of the labor of parents and childless alike to pay the expenses. You, the parent, are to be relieved of any choice as to these matters; just leave it to the police force."

Second, these police force devices falsely earmark the educational period. They say, ever so compellingly, that the period of education is the period to which the compulsion applies. The ceremonies of "graduation"—diplomas and licenses—if not derivatives of this system, are consistent with it. Government education is resulting in young folks coming out of school thinking of themselves as educated and concluding that the beginning of earning is the end of learning. If any devotee of government education will concede that learning ought to continue throughout all of life, he should, to be

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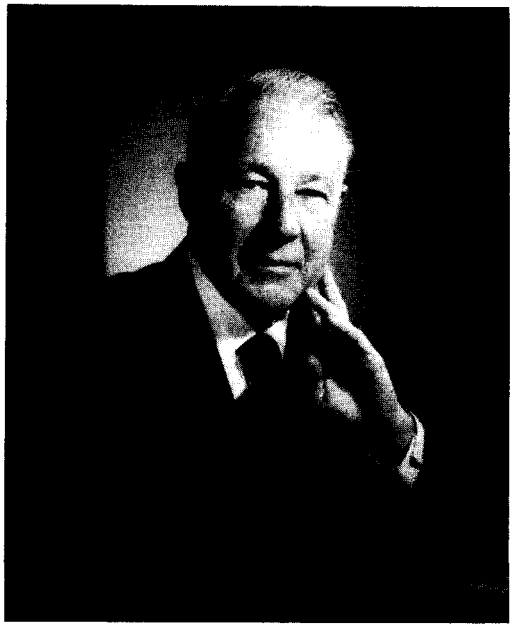
consistent, insist on compulsion for adults as well as for children—for the octogenarian as well as for the teenager. The system that is supposed to give all an equal start in life tends to put an end to learning just at the time when the spirit of inquiry should begin its most meaningful growth.

A Faith in Freedom

It was stated above that no one could know what would happen were there to be no more police-force-as-boss in education. That assertion is correct concerning specifics and details, but there are generalizations which can be confidently predicted. For instance, one knows that creative energies would be released; that latent potential energies would turn to flowing, moving, power-giving, kinetic energies and activities. Creative thought on education would manifest itself in millions of individuals. Such genius as we potentially and compositely possess would assert itself and take the place of deadening restraints. Any person who understands the free market knows, without any qualification whatsoever, that there would be more education and better education. And a person with a faith in free men is confident that the cost per unit of learning accomplished would be far less. For one thing, there wouldn't be any police boss to pay for. Nor would there be the financial irresponsibility that characterizes those who spend other people's money. The free market is truly free.

Not only is this faith in uninhibited, creative human energy rationally justified, but also there is evidence aplenty to confirm it. In other words, this faith is supported both theoretically and pragmatically. Except in the minds of those who are temperamentally slaves—those who seek a shepherd and a sheep dog, those who are ideologically attuned to authoritarianism— there does not exist a single creative activity now being conducted by man in voluntary action that could be improved by subjecting it to the police-force-as-boss. But put any one of these activities, now voluntarily conducted, under government control, leave it there for



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a short period, and general opinion would soon hold that the activity could not be conducted voluntarily. . . .

It is a separation from reality, a blindness to the enormous evidence in support of freedom—like being unaware of our autonomic nervous system and its importance—that accounts for much of our loss of faith in the productivity of an educational system relieved of restraints and compulsions. The restraints, be it remembered, are in the form of taxes—the taking away of the wherewithal to finance one's own educational plan. The compulsions are in the form of forced attendance and dictated curricula. . . .

The myth of government education, in our country today, is an article of general faith. To question the myth is to tamper with the faith, a business that few will read about or listen to or calmly tolerate. In short, for those who would make the case for educational freedom as they would for freedom in religion, let them be warned that this is a first-rate obstacle course. But heart can be taken in the fact that the art of becoming is composed of acts of overcoming. And becoming is life's prime purpose; becoming is, in fact, enlightenment—self-education, its own reward. □

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THE FREEMAN
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HOMESCHOOLING AND EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

by Dennis L. Peterson

The 1992 election campaign brought to the forefront of public attention an issue whose time apparently has come: school choice. The condition of public education has deteriorated until parents are demanding the opportunity to choose alternative schools for their children, whether different public schools, private academies, or parochial schools.

Conspicuously missing from the discussion, however, has been an alternative form of schooling that has already been the choice of the parents of an estimated 250,000 to 1,000,000 children: homeschooling. According to an article in *USAir Magazine* (March 1991), its estimate of 500,000 homeschooled youngsters is "perhaps only half the actual number," and the total is increasing every year.

Five years ago, my perception of homeschooling was at best neutral and in some instances openly negative. I saw homeschooling as an over-reaction of well-meaning but misguided parents to admittedly bad conditions in public education. I could understand and support one's choice of a traditional private school; I had even taught in several such schools, and two of my four daughters were enrolled in one. But homeschooling was a step off the deep end. Whoever made that choice deserved whatever harassment they got from hostile local or state government officials.

Today, however, my perception has changed dramatically. After careful research and consideration, my wife and I stepped off the deep end, too. We pulled our two oldest daughters out of their traditional private school and began teaching all four of our daughters (the youngest two were kindergarten age at the time) at home. We are now in our fourth year of homeschooling and are more convinced than ever that we made the right decision.

Countering Objections to Homeschooling

Several objections are raised against parents' homeschooling their children. Perhaps the most frequent contention is that it robs the child of opportunities for proper socialization and therefore leaves them unprepared to interact with not only children their own age but also adults. Most homeschoolers, however, including ourselves, are involved regularly in myriad outside-the-home social situations. Church youth group activities, scouting, various sports leagues, and a variety of clubs offer sufficient opportunities for socialization. Experience reveals, in fact, that in many cases homeschooled children are actually *better* able to interrelate with their peers and older folk as

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well. Many support groups are available among homeschooling families to provide for social activities as well as for opportunities for public performances by the children. Our girls regularly take part in plays, recitations, and work demonstrations sponsored by the support group to which we belong.

Perhaps the second most frequently voiced objection to homeschooling is that untrained parents are not certified professional educators; therefore, they are incapable of adequately teaching their own children. Beside the fact that state certification has never been a guarantee of teaching ability or professional qualification, there is much that can be said to counter this charge. Not even the *best* classroom teacher, with from 15 to 30 or more students, can know any individual child as well as do his parents, let alone provide that child with the individual care and attention he often needs.

The homeschooling parent, on the other hand, has an almost ideal teacher-student ratio of from 1:1 to 1:5, thus permitting a great deal of individual attention. Former Secretary of Education William J. Bennett wrote in *The Devaluing of America*, "When serious teachers are asked the single most important improvement that could be made in education, they invariably say greater involvement and cooperation on the part of parents." One could not ask for a higher degree of parental involvement than homeschooling provides for the child.

But the argument goes further than parental involvement. The typical homeschooling family, according to the *USAir Magazine* article quoted earlier, has "one principal wage earner, almost always the father, making almost $30,000 per year. *Both parents enjoy approximately 1.5 years more education than the average American*" (emphasis added). Homeschooling parents are not generally high-school dropouts; they are well-educated. For example, in a random sampling of the 30 or so parents in our local support group, more than two-thirds are college graduates (and many of those have graduate degrees), and several are former teachers.

Even for the parents who are not trained educators, however, the availability of curricula specially designed for homeschool parents make successful home-based education possible. As the number of parents opting to educate their own children has increased, so has the demand for high-quality teaching materials. With greater demand has come a proliferation of educational publishers, many of them university presses, who are willing to provide the specialized curricula and related materials. Resourceful parents have learned to mix and match curricula to meet the individual needs of their children. An entire industry has evolved to research, develop, test, and market these textbooks and teaching aids.

Life Is Education

Homeschooling parents also have capitalized on extra-curricular learning opportunities, proving that education, rather than being confined to the traditional classroom and restricted to the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. five days a week for nine months a year, is perpetual and unlimited. Education is life; life is education. Thus, they make wise and frequent use of family field trips, learning at times and in places that often are inaccessible to students in traditional schools.

For instance, our family enjoys camping. We count our camping trips as school days because we consciously plan educational activities for the children. We study biology together as we explore mountain streams and hike nature trails. We learn together about how our ancestors lived as we visit living history exhibits, watch mountain craftsmen, and listen to park rangers' nightly talks on the pioneers and Indians who once lived in our rugged mountains. We create both verbal pictures and visual sketches as we contemplate the nature around us in the wild. We learn how to provide for our health and safety in the wilderness and how to appreciate and care for our land's natural resources. Perhaps the best part about all of this learning is that the girls never complain that they "have to go to

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school." They now know that learning and having fun as a family are complementary, not competitive, activities.

Homeschooling is not a panacea, and it is not for everyone. Whoever considers it should carefully count the costs before taking the leap. In deciding to homeschool our children, we carefully weighed and willingly chose to accept the following limitations and restrictions.

First, homeschooling leaves us less personal time to do what we as parents would do individually or together as a couple. Homeschooling (if it is done right) takes an awful lot of time in preparation and application. It can tend to monopolize one's thoughts and conversations, to say nothing of the time it takes. It certainly intrudes on private time, especially one's hobbies. For example, part of the price I must pay to homeschool our daughters is giving up some of my own reading and writing activities. My wife can spend less time with her crafts and gardening or lawn care.

Second, it can mean living in a house that *looks* well lived in and that is by no means in showcase condition. The yard may at times have to go an extra week before it gets mowed. The laundry may pile up. The next remodeling or redecorating project may get bumped to the back burner indefinitely. But what is a house if it is not a place where real people live? Besides, we have found that many of those cleaning tasks can get done through teamwork with each family member carrying a little of the load and applying a few of Leonard Read's economic principles for boys and girls—picking it up if you drop it, putting it away if you get it out, and cleaning it up if you mess it up. And in the process, the children are learning responsibility.

Finally, homeschooling is an added financial burden. Just because we are not using the facilities, materials, or teachers of the public school system does not exempt us from paying for them. But we choose to accept the additional expenses of textbooks, materials, registration, higher field trip fees (most places don't give homeschoolers group discounts) and testing required by homeschooling. For our situation, this averages an additional annual expense of about $600. But we believe the benefits far outweigh the cost.

Control of Curricula and Teaching Time

One such benefit is that we have gained control of the curricula of our children and are able to devote time and effort teaching the facts, values, and principles that are most important to us as a family. Because we select and teach the materials, we do not have to worry about a stranger foisting onto our children values or ideas foreign to our beliefs. We have no fear of a teacher using a program that supposedly is designed to "clarify" values but that in reality *undermines* the values we hold.

Another benefit is that it gives us control of teaching time, permitting us to devote either more or less time to certain lessons according to the individual needs and interests of each child. No longer does our brightest daughter have to sit and wait for other slower students to finish their work before she can go on to new lessons. No longer must a slower daughter be frustrated to tears because the teacher cannot take time to offer her individual help lest she hold the entire class back; she, too, can proceed at her own pace. Plus (and our girls *really* like this point), we do not lose precious time getting everyone lined up to go to the rest room, lunch, or recess!

A third benefit is that we are getting priceless, never-to-be-repeated opportunities to know our children as individuals because we spend so much time doing things together. We have become firm believers in the idea that children need not only *quality* time but also large *quantities* of time with their parents. Homeschooling permits both.

Another benefit is the flexibility that homeschooling affords. Although few interruptions are permitted when our school is in session, we can be flexible in times of emergency. If pressing business demands that we travel on a school day, we don't have to pull the girls out of classes; we take the classes with us and learn as we go. We

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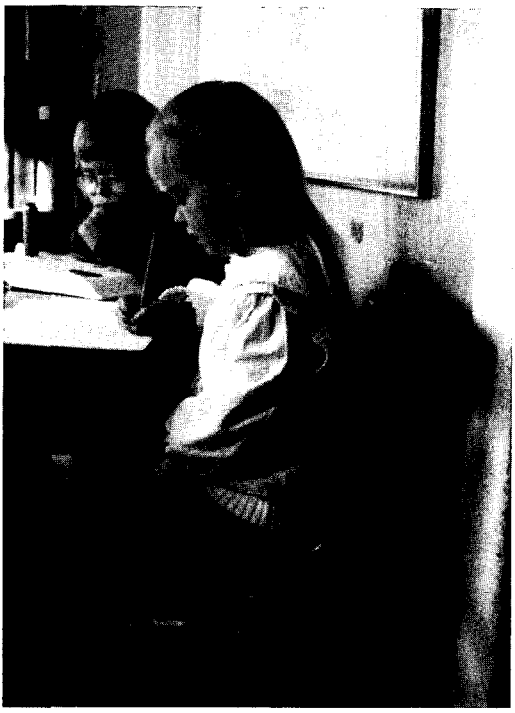
can have school at night, on Saturday, or even on holidays. We can conduct classes in the summer if we want (although we generally try to adhere closely to the local public school calendar because most of the girls' playmates attend public schools).

But just as homeschooling has many tempting benefits, it also has some dangers. Perhaps the danger most widely feared among homeschool parents is interference by government. As the number of parents who homeschool has increased, so has the number of situations in which government has tried to force parents to compromise their convictions or even to give up homeschooling altogether. Some parents have been challenged because they are not certified to teach, do not have college degrees, or have refused to register with local authorities. Of those who have been so harassed, a few have been sued or even jailed for various violations. Some local public school authorities seem especially bent on discouraging homeschooling within their districts because each homeschooler represents thousands of dollars in lost revenue for their schools if funding is allotted according to individual school enrollment.

In recent years, however, many authorities have begun to be more cooperative with homeschoolers. Every state now permits some form of home education, each with somewhat different rules and regulations. In our state, for example, any parent with a high school diploma may homeschool his or her child through the eighth grade; parents of high schoolers must have a college degree. (Parents without a degree may apply for a waiver, but none has ever been granted.) Students must have at least a 180-day school year and must be tested in grades 2, 5, 7, and 9. Homeschoolers must be registered with either the local school superintendent or a private "umbrella" school. Although the cooperation of local officials seems to make the climate for homeschoolers better, that in itself seems to be a cause for concern: whenever the power of government is involved in something—even for apparently good causes—the recipients of such favor or tolerance should beware.



DEBBIE BEISNER

This is the greatest fear my wife and I have of the much-discussed government-sponsored school choice plans. Unless the choice is *totally free*, government can and will make its power felt somewhere in the "choice" process. Perhaps it will come in the guise of limiting the choice to only other public schools, to "approved" or accredited private schools, or to parents who have degrees from government-approved colleges or even to parents who have been certified. If the voucher plan is approved for a school choice program, wherever government funds or tax credits are extended so is the strong, controlling arm of government. Government funds always come with strings attached.

Undoubtedly the best possible school choice plan would be the free market: no government coercion to attend *any* school. That means total freedom to choose—whether that choice be public schools (should any survive the competition of the free market), private schools, homeschooling, or even no school at all. Let the market, which has brought the United States such unsurpassed material prosperity, bring us a similar educational prosperity. □

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BOOKS

Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling

by John Taylor Gatto

New Society Publishers, 4527 Springfield Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19143 • 120 pages • $9.95 paperback

Reviewed by Hannah B. Lapp

If John Taylor Gatto were introducing his book to us, he'd do us the favor of introducing himself first. In order to do justice to Mr. Gatto and his eye-opening book, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*, I must offer first of all a few words on the author himself.

Mr. Gatto taught for 26 years in New York City public schools, a number of these years in Harlem and Spanish Harlem. But his "heart and habit," he asserts in his "Biographical Note," are still in Monongahela, the small riverside town in Pennsylvania where he spent his early years. He describes the town as "an altogether wonderful place to grow up, even to grow up poor," a place where "independence, toughness, and self-reliance were honored," and where, he says, he "learned to teach from being taught by everyone in town."

A year and a half ago, the public school system lost Mr. Gatto, and along with him it lost much of the smokescreen that has enabled it to remain so remarkably unchallenged over the years. Just after receiving the 1991 New York State Teacher of the Year Award, Mr. Gatto announced he was going to quit because he didn't want to "hurt" kids anymore. "Government schooling," he charged, "kills the family by monopolizing the best times of childhood and by teaching disrespect for home and parents."

The publishers of *Dumbing Us Down* call Gatto's ideas about education "not easily pigeon-holed," which is an accurate observation. Who else would stand up and tell us that schooling as we know it is not education, but a "twelve-year jail sentence where bad habits are the only curriculum truly learned"?

According to Gatto's observations, the seven lessons taught in public schools from Harlem to Hollywood Hills, are these:

1. *Confusion* (The natural order of real life is violated by heaping disconnected facts on students.)
2. *Class position* (Children are locked together into categories where the lesson is that "everyone has a proper place in the pyramid.")
3. *Indifference* (Inflexible school regimens deprive children of complete experiences.)
4. *Emotional dependency* (Kids are taught to surrender their individuality to a "predestined chain of command.")
5. *Intellectual dependency* (One of the biggest lessons schools teach is conformity rather than curiosity.)
6. *Provisional self-esteem* ("The lesson of report cards, grades, and tests, is that children should not trust themselves or their parents, but should instead rely on the evaluation of certified officials.")
7. *One can't hide* (Schooling and homework assignments deny children privacy and free time in which to learn from parents, from exploration, or from community.)

He also contends that many of our modern society's excesses, including the growth of commercial entertainment, such as television, the dependence on experts, and even parts of our economic structure (prepared-food industries, for example) would wither once people started truly thinking and acting for themselves. The thought of people doing more things for themselves is exciting, but I hope Gatto doesn't mean to say that working for pay is always dependency. And although it's true that most individuals would benefit from diversifying their skills, Gatto would have to admit that highly specialized professions also have their place in a prosperous society.

The best thing about Gatto is he doesn't seek to impose his version of desirable

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education on anyone else. Neither can he be accused of being anti-civilization, and certainly not anti-education. He speaks admiringly of early America's prosperity (and literacy) through individual initiative, and even offers ideas toward the revival of better schools and communities in our current day.

As for solutions to the state of our educational system, Gatto at one point advocates a voucher, or school choice system, which would still be sadly deficient because of its dependence on government funds. His real thrust, though, comes out beautifully on page 79: "Break up these institutional schools, decertify teaching, let anyone who has a mind to teach bid for customers, privatize this whole business—trust the free market system. I know it's easier to say than do, but what other choice do we have?"

Sure, it's a radical proposal, and Gatto doubtless has his enemies. However, there's a part of every one of us that thrills to his appeal to unleash the infinite possibilities within the human mind. And most of us can't help asking ourselves questions, such as, "Where did we ever get the idea that education means just the same thing to one person as it does to another?" Even more relevant: "How did we ever come to accept that any one group's version of education should be forcibly imposed on every American child?"

Reading *Dumbing Us Down* with an inquisitive mind is a whale of a learning experience, and it doesn't take long to do. The book is only 120 pages, every one of them delightfully original. □

Hannah Lapp is a free-lance writer who lives in Cassadaga, New York.

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